HISTORY OF THE GERMAN PEOPLE

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VOL. IV.

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By Johannes Janssen

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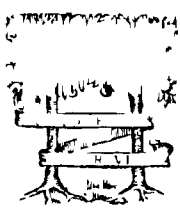

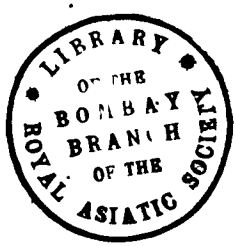

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HISTORY

OF

THE GERMAN PEOPLE

AT THE CLOSE OF THE MIDDLE AGES

BOOK VI—*continued*

CHAPTER VII

INFLUENCE OF EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES ON INTERNAL CONDITIONS

'GERMAN affairs present a melancholy look-out,' wrote Carl von Bodmann on August 23, 1523, 'but we might still hope for reconciliation and peace, if only, according to the ardent wish of the Pope, the Christian Powers would come to an agreement among themselves, and by a great joint crusade against the infidels would ward off the danger from which all Christendom is threatened, reawaken the Christian spirit of common brotherhood, and open up to all discontented and adventurous minds a wide field of activity in the lands that might then be freed from Turkish tyranny. So long, however, as the Christian Powers carry on war and carnage against one another the internal

embarrassments will increase from year to year; no powerful hand controls the masses, impatient for revolt; dearth and poverty increase and spread; the Turk draws nearer and nearer to us, and is supported by *Christian* Turks, especially by France, whose king, thirsting for conquest, stirs up rebellion everywhere, kindles the flame of war, and brings to nought all the great schemes and enterprises of the Emperor. The French king is indeed the disturber of the peace of Christendom; and the volcano of war will never become extinct till France is once more restrained within her original boundaries.'[1]

Francis I. of France showed himself, in truth, as the troubler of Christendom. He was determined, as he himself said, not to yield in any way to his more fortunate rival in the electoral choice, still less to own himself subject to him; he even denied Charles the title of Emperor.[2] Most deeply mortified in his ambition by his rejection at the election, he intended to show that he 'and no other was the mightiest monarch,' that his country 'was capable and worthy of the greatest conquests.' He meant to prove this without any regard to conscience and justice, and if necessary to become 'the hammer of the universe.'

In the year 1520 Francis had opened hostilities against the Emperor, as King of Spain, by helping the pretender to the kingdom of Navarre with money and

[1] The Cardinal of Santa Croce, Bernardino de Carvajal, was also of opinion in the year 1522 that general peace throughout Christendom and a general crusade against the Turks would only be possible if France restored to Charles V. and Henry VIII. of England all that she had taken from these two monarchs. See Höfler's *Carl V. und Adrian VI.* p. 19.

[2] See Charles V.'s mandate to the Elector, May 21, 1521 (Lanz, *Actenstücke und Briefe*, i. 191).

men; in May 1521 he made an attempt to reinstate the latter by force, and helped on an invasion of Castile. To the English ambassador, who remonstrated with him on his proceedings, he replied that he would not be thwarted in his victorious course. At the insurrection of the Castilian communities he had everywhere the game in his own hands.[1]

Greatly to the disadvantage of the Germanic Empire, Charles was obliged to absent himself from it at an early date and return to Spain, in order to save himself from having to reconquer that kingdom from France.

With the connivance of the French king and the help of French money, Robert de la Marck, Duke of Bouillon, had levied troops in Paris to make war on Charles's dominions of the Netherlands. In a letter in his own handwriting, which fell into the hands of the Emperor's friends, Francis informed the Count of Carpi of the assistance he was giving Duke Robert, and of his intentions to stir up sedition in Italy, and to effect the conquest of Naples and Sicily. At the very time that Francis, in defiance of the rights and prestige of the Empire, was insisting that the Emperor should not undertake an armed expedition to Rome, he declared himself ready to penetrate into Italy at the head of 50,000 men.

'Charles of Spain,' he said in July 1520, 'appears powerful enough by reason of the many countries that belong to him, but he is nowhere secure in his possession, and his coffers are empty. I, on the contrary, rule over a subject nation; I have money in superfluity, and I can

[1] '. . . All these troubles were stirred up by the King of France . . .' (Brewer, 3[b], 560).

also use the possessions of the Church in furtherance of my schemes.'[1]

'Therefore I do not fear the King of Spain, and I shall find allies against him in Germany also.' 'In everything' he believed himself 'to have the advantage over Charles.' The Emperor's legitimate inheritance of Burgundy was in his hands; he had possession of the imperial territory of Milan and nearly the whole of Lombardy, besides Genoa; he was in league with the Venetians, and, in accordance with a treaty of May 5, 1521, he had the belligerent force of the confederates at his service.[2] In Germany he had not yet actually secured any allies, but German patriots were complaining in the year 1522 that 'not only the German Swiss but also numbers of Germans from the heart of the Empire, both nobles and commons, were serving for French pay against the Emperor and the Empire,' and that 'all the orders issued by the Emperor and his Council against this treachery to the Fatherland were quite fruitless.'

In order to make a stand against the French king's greed of conquest and to prevent the complete subjection of Italy to France, the Emperor had entered into

[1] 'Hanno del tutto,' wrote the Venetian ambassador, Marino Cavalli, concerning the French, 'rimessa la libertà e volontà loro al re; tal che basta che lui *dica*, voler tanto, approbar tanto, che il tutto è eseguito e fatto *praeciso*, como se essi stessi lo deliberassero . . . prima li suoi re si chiamavano reges Francorum, oro si possono dimandar *reges servorum*' (Albèri, i. 232).

[2] How the Emperor, however, estimated the belligerent importance of the confederates is seen in his instructions for his envoy to the English king, Henry VIII., of August 16, 1519: 'C'est l'universel repos de toute la chrestiente de les tenir lyez a la bonne et sainte intencion . . . de nous. . . . C'est le secret de tous les secrets de les gaigner, quoy qu'ilz coustent. . . . C'est le principal de tous nos affaires' (Lanz, *Actenstücke und Briefe*, i. 106, 107).

an alliance with the Pope in May 1521, with a view to driving the French out of Italy. According to this agreement Milan and Genoa were to be recovered to the Empire, but were to be governed by native dukes under the suzerainty of the Emperor; Parma and Piacenza, which Francis I. had also seized, were to be restored to the Church; the claims of the Pope on Ferrara were to be furthered by the Emperor, and the rights of the Empire with regard to Venice to be supported by the Pope; the Emperor also promised his assistance in the protection of Naples. Henry VIII. of England also, after having become convinced that it was the King of France who had broken the peace, formed a close alliance with the Emperor. On June 24, 1521, an attack by the French on the town of Reggio, belonging to the Church, was the signal for the outbreak of war in Italy.

'I shall soon make an entry into Rome,' said Francis in August 1521, 'and lay down laws for the Pope.' He was greatly mistaken, however. In November the French were driven out of Milan; in April 1522 they lost the battle of Bicocca, and nearly the whole Milanese territory fell into the hands of the imperial army; Genoa, too, was conquered, and the two dukedoms of Milan and Genoa were placed under native princes, with constitutions of their own. 'It is the valour of our *Landsknechts*, under Georg von Frundsberg, that we have to thank,' was the jubilant paean in patriotic circles, 'for restoring to the Empire those possessions in Italy which have belonged to it for centuries; the imperial eagle again floats there triumphantly, as in the glorious past.'

'But the rejoicings over the propitious events in

Italy, and over restored tranquillity in Spain,' wrote the Archduke Ferdinand, 'were more than counterbalanced in the mind of the Emperor by distress at the ever increasing danger, hanging over all Christian peoples, of a subjugation by the Turks.'

Sultan Solyman, who in August 1521 had captured Belgrade, 'one of the eyes of Christendom,' was now preparing, in June 1522, to take possession of the 'other eye' also, the island of Rhodes. 'If the Turk succeeds in making himself master of this island,' wrote the Emperor on August 25, 1522, to Poupet de la Chaux, 'the door will be open to him, and the key in his hands (after Hungary has been crippled and wellnigh ruined), to penetrate into Naples and Sicily, and right into the Church territory; and when he has traversed these districts, to conquer the whole of Italy and annihilate all Christendom will be a mere trifle. You know that without any fault of our own we have been dragged into this great and costly war, which has made a tremendous pull on our treasury, and we have therefore good grounds for refusing the burden of resistance to the Turks, all the more so as we declared ourselves willing to spend the subsidies, granted us at the Diet of Worms for an expedition to Rome, in a Turkish war. But in order to show that we have never entertained any other wish than to put forth all our might against the infidels, we have resolved, as first Prince of Christendom, as Protector and Defender of our faith and of the Church, to work with all our strength and to devote all our means to the rescuing of Rhodes.' To this end, he was writing, he said, for help to the King of England, to the Dukes of Savoy and Lorraine, to the Venetians and the

Florentines, to his allies in Italy and elsewhere, and also to the Pope. 'If only,' he added, alluding to the King of France, 'the Turks were not stimulated and encouraged in their undertakings by those who are the real authors of all the evil and who are delivering up Christendom to perdition!'[1]

Francis I. was, in fact, profiting by the Turkish danger for his own ends.

When, by command of the Pope, two carracks were fitted out in Genoa for Rhodes, the French carried them off; when Spanish noblemen betook themselves to Genoa, in order to sail thence to Rhodes, the 'French Turks' took possession of their ships. The Venetians also were 'thoroughgoing Turks.' They commanded more than fifty galleys, and could with the greatest ease have destroyed the Turkish fleet when it lay in the harbour of Rhodes; they could have cut off the besieging army from dry land, and with one blow have made an end of the whole Turkish expedition; but they brought their whole fleet to anchor before Candia, instructed it to lie quiet, and banished two citizens of Venice who wanted to send help to Rhodes.

Only the Pope, Adrian VI., sent the knights 'what money he was able to collect;' the Emperor's succour came too late, and so, in spite of the heroic resistance of the knights, the island fell to the Turks. Solyman also made himself master of the other islands belonging to Rhodes, opened up to the Ottoman fleet the hitherto

[1] See Lanz, *Correspondence*, i. 66–67. Concerning Charles's ardent longing to make war on the Turks see also the report of the Venetian ambassador Contarini, in Albèri. ii. 61, 66, where the following extremely favourable opinion is given: 'E uomo religiosissimo, molto giusto, privo d' ogni vizio, niente dedito alle voluttà, alle quali sogliono esser dediti li giovani, ne si diletta di spasso alcuno,' and so forth.

obstructed passage between Constantinople and Alexandria, and secured to himself the approaches to Asia Minor; the Venetians, who had left Rhodes in the lurch, had now to defend themselves first against the conquest of Cyprus, and then of Candia.

Already before the loss of Rhodes, Pope Adrian had tried every means of bringing about peace between the Emperor and the King of France; he only knew one way for the healing of Christendom, so he wrote to Charles in September 1522, and that was peace between him and King Francis. The Emperor assured him that he was ready for peace or for a truce, as soon as France would agree to honourable terms, and this would be soonest brought about if the Pope would join with him and the King of England in an alliance against France. Adrian, however, did not wish, 'except under the most urgent necessity,' to participate in a war, and he went on indefatigably with his peace negotiations. He implored the King of England and his minister Cardinal Wolsey, now that by the loss of Rhodes all Christendom was threatened with ruin, to take active measures for the establishment of universal peace; and to agree at once to a several years' truce, which would be best negotiated in Rome itself and through papal agency. The Emperor and the King of England were willing to enter on a truce of three years, during which period all the strong places belonging to one or other of the Powers should be surrendered to the Pope; but the French king replied to the Pope's letter that he could not listen to his proposals until Milan, which was his heritage, was restored to him; a truce, he said, would lead to nothing; against the Turks he could promise no help.

Far from being seriously intent on peace, Francis was only anxious to kindle fresh sparks of war, and to develop the Scotch enmity for the English into a Scotch invasion of England. A speaker in the English Parliament felt himself justified in saying, 'The French greed of conquest is so insatiable that we English, even if we had no quarrel with them ourselves, ought to abominate them for their falseness towards other princes. If they are not scourged themselves they will become a scourge for others.'[1]

In Rome, Francis kept up a secret understanding with Cardinal Soderini, on whom the guileless Pope had bestowed entire confidence. Soderini informed the French king that a fresh rebellion against the Emperor had broken out in Sicily, and solicited him to help the insurgents with his fleet; this revolt was to be the signal for a rising in Lombardy and for the return of the French into Italy. But the despatches relating to the transaction were seized, and Adrian, incensed at the treachery of his minister, ordered the Cardinal to be put in prison, and appointed a tribunal to pass sentence on him. When Francis I. heard of the incarceration of Soderini he flew into a passion. He recalled his accredited ambassador at the Papal See, caused the papal nuncio in Paris to be arrested, and addressed to Adrian, who had threatened him with excommunication, a letter bristling with the most arrogant and offensive language, and holding up before the Pope the fate of Boniface VIII. Boniface VIII., he said, had ventured on an undertaking against Philippe le Bel of France, which had turned out ill. 'Let me advise you in your wisdom to remember

[1] See v. Höfler, *Carl V. und Adrian VI.* pp. 10, 40–44; *Adrian VI.* p. 483 ff.

this.' By command of Philip, Boniface had been attacked at Agnani by Wilhelm Nogaret, and maltreated.

The hint at possible similar treatment, and at loss of his liberty, moved the Pope at last to join the alliance of the Emperor, and the King of England, against Francis I. Venice had just separated itself from France, and on July 29, 1523, had concluded a treaty with the Emperor and the Archduke Ferdinand for the defence of Italy. Other Italian princes and towns joined the league, and the hope was now cherished that at last the Alps were secured against the French king, and that under the excellent Pope Adrian, so distinguished for his piety, a crusade against the Turks could positively be reckoned on. The allies hoped all the more certainly 'for a complete extinction of French annoyance,' because the Constable of France, Duke Charles of Bourbon, whom Francis had personally offended by defrauding him of his wife's inheritance, had offered his assistance. The Duke even promised Henry VIII., who was desirous of establishing the claims of his ancestors on France, that he would acknowledge him as future King of France.[1]

'All Europe,' said Francis in the Parliament at Paris, 'is uniting for my ruin, but I will pit myself against the whole of Europe. I do not fear the Emperor, for he has no money; nor the King of England, for the approaches to Picardy are well defended; nor the Netherlanders, for they are bad soldiers. I will go to Italy myself; I will seize Milan and will leave my enemies no shred of what they have taken from me.' 'I shall not be satisfied,' he wrote in August 1523 to

[1] Bradford, *Correspondence of the Emperor Charles V.* (London, 1850), p. 51.

Montmorency, 'until I have led my army across the Alps.'[1]

From fear, however, that on the irruption of a Spanish and English army into France, the Duke of Bourbon, of whose treacherous dealings he had been informed, would raise an insurrection, he did not leave his kingdom himself, but sent Admiral Bonnivet to Italy, at the end of August, with considerable forces, for the reconquest of Milan. The war now broke out in France also. An allied army of English and Netherlanders, under the command of the Duke of Suffolk and Count von Büren, penetrated to the Oise, eleven miles from Paris, and threw the French capital into consternation; a Spanish army invaded Béarn and Guyenne; and German troops, under the Counts Wilhelm and Felix von Fürstenberg, marched into the Duchy of Burgundy and into Champagne. No important engagements took place in any of these districts, but everywhere the inhabitants suffered enormously from the ravages of the troops, and, worse still, a general war conflagration seemed imminent.

In order 'to fan the flames of war in Germany' King Francis in October 1523 (as the Archbishop of Treves was informed) instigated the banished Duke Ulrich of Würtemberg, then in his service, 'to stir up an insurrection among the peasants and to force an entry into his duchy at their head;' he promised him towards this end 'substantial help in money.' He also endeavoured to win over Duke John III. of Cleve to this end, and sent him handsome presents. At a meeting of the members of the Suabian League in Ulm, he sent an envoy with a letter to the Augsburg delegate, in which

[1] See v. Höfler, *Carl V. und Adrian VI.* pp. 64 65.

he gave him to understand that great commercial profit would accrue if they did not give the Emperor any help in the Italian war, but, on the contrary, helped the King of France to reconquer Milan.[1]

'The secret intrigues of the French king,' Carl von Bodmann wrote to Rome, 'are so multitudinous that it is seriously to be feared, that in order to put obstacles in the way of the Emperor and the Archduke Ferdinand, and to cripple the power of Germany as much as possible, he will make use of the religious disturbances, and do all in his power to encourage them. In the towns which care only for commercial prosperity, he has already numbers of adherents. Delegates from the imperial cities, who had sought an audience from the King in Lyons, assured him that their 'liege lords would in all respects behave to his Majesty in such a way as to secure his gracious favour.' They begged him nevertheless 'not to let the imperial cities suffer for his enmity to the Emperor;' they would endeavour to the utmost of their power to bring these also into submission to his kingly Majesty. Francis replied to the delegates, with whom he had conferred for a whole hour, 'quite graciously and amicably' that 'the towns should be treated by the Crown of France with no less honour and respect than his own subjects, that they should be protected and provisioned, and that they need not fear any danger.' 'You will communicate all this to the imperial cities,' he said at the end of the conversation, in which, moreover, he had given vent to his

[1] The imperial messenger, Hannart, informed the Emperor on March 13, 1524, that 'le roi de France a puis aucun temps enca escript bonnes et gracieuses lettres aux villes impériales, pour gangnyer leur bonne voulunte, et par ce destorber quilz ne vous donnent assistence contre luy.' See Lanz, *Correspondence*, i. 105.

wrath against the Emperor, and laid on him the blame of the war; which blame, the Emperor, with perfect justice, repudiated.

'You are well aware,' Charles wrote on January 16, 1524, in a confidential letter to his brother Ferdinand, 'and it is indeed known to everybody, that it is my constant aim and desire to have peace and quiet in Christendom. And all that I have done, and am still doing, has only this one object, to unite together the arms and forces of Christians, not only in order to drive off the Turks and infidels, but also to subdue them, and to augment and spread abroad the Christian faith and religion.'[1] He was 'always inclined for peace with France,' he wrote on September 14, 1523, to Clement VII., who had ascended the Papal Chair on the death of Adrian, and was calling on the belligerent Powers to suspend their sanguinary, devastating campaigns. He would appoint him (Clement), said the Emperor, as mediator, so that everybody should recognise how willing he was to adapt himself to all honourable and reasonable terms.[2]

Again, after the imperial army had achieved brilliant results in Italy, Charles, in April 1524, sent his ambassador at the English Court fuller instructions for endeavouring, under the mediation of the Pope, to

[1] 'Mon frère, vous savez assez, et il est a tous notoire, comme toujours mon desir et principale affection a este davoir et entretenir paix et repoz en la chrestiente. Et tout ce que jay fait et faiz pressentement nest sinon tendant a leffect de ladicte paix, moiennant laquelle les armes et forces des chrestiens se puissent joindre et unir, afin de non seulement repulser les Turcs et infideles en leur emprinses, mais aussi leur faire la guerre, augmenter, exaucer, et amplyer la foi et religion chrestiennes.'—Lanz, *Correspondence*, i. 81.

[2] See Bucholtz, ii. 248. Charles's letter to Lannoy of April 15, 1524.

come to an understanding with the English ambassador, with a view to general peace.[1]

Meanwhile the French king had '*mächtig practicirt*,' in order, where possible, to gain allies against the Emperor among the princes and towns, and to set up a new Roman king in opposition to Charles.

At the Diet of Nuremberg, in the following year, Francis hoped that his machinations would come to a practical issue.

'. . . Pour parvenir à quelque honeste moyen de paix universelle entre nous et les autres princes chrétiens a fin de pouvoir mieulx dresser les communes armes contre les infidèles' (instructions for Gerard de Pleme, M. de la Roche; see Bucholtz, ii. 503 519).

CHAPTER VIII

DIET OF NUREMBERG, 1524—A RELIGIOUS CONVENTION PROPOSED

At the close of the last Diet it had been resolved that another one should be held at Nuremberg on July 13, 1523, St. Margaret's Day. But as, at the appointed date, only the councillors of the electors and of a few of the notables made their appearance in Nuremberg, the assembly was postponed till November 11, when it was hoped that, in view of the pressing needs of the Empire, all the notables would be present.

With the express object of thwarting the resolutions of the last Diet, and more especially the obnoxious scheme for the new customs-duty, the Free Cities had sent a special deputation to the Emperor in Spain. On August 9, 1523, their envoys obtained an audience of the Emperor at Valladolid, and two days later they handed in to the four imperial councillors appointed to treat with them, an exhaustive memorandum, in which they stated all their grievances against the higher estates. They urged their right to 'a seat and a voice' at the Diets, which the princes persistently refused them, and they refused to acknowledge their obligation to submit to the decision of a majority. 'They were not always bound,' they said, 'to approve of the resolutions of their fellow members, and things that concerned

many estates, and many persons, ought to be discussed and settled by all the members,' especially 'as they were conscious of wishing for no other decisions than what were consonant with justice, honour, and propriety.' To the imperial customs-duty voted for at the Diet at Nuremberg they declared themselves unable to consent. The sole results of such a measure would be complete ruin of all trade and commerce, wholesale and retail, large, small, or medium, and the emigration of all mercantile people from Germany into foreign lands. It was not only to the Free Cities that this duty would be 'entirely destructive;' it would also bring great loss on the Empire generally, and would incite the common people, who, as it was, 'under the pretext of liberty were already showing many signs of insubordination, to still worse revolt and seditiousness.' The towns would be reduced to beggary by such a large disbursement of ready money, and the duty would bring little profit to the Emperor, for the money could easily be diverted from flowing into his exchequer, as had often been done in the case of former duties, and turned more to the detriment than the good of the Empire. The tax was imposed nominally for the maintenance of the *Reichsregiment*, but peace and justice would be much better ensured by the election of a Roman king than by a Council of Regency; as Roman king the towns would prefer the Emperor's brother, Archduke Ferdinand.

When it was represented to the commissioners by the imperial councillors, that in a brief to the Emperor the Pope had complained that Augsburg, Strasburg, and Nuremberg were favourable to Luther's doctrines and encouraged the circulation of his books, they flatly

denied the charge, and said it was 'one of the many calumnious reports' spread abroad by their ill-wishers. 'It was not these towns that favoured, encouraged, or championed Luther; but those who did support him were sufficiently well known.' It was true indeed that the common people thirsted for the Gospel and for Bible teaching, but 'it was also the truth, they said, and they were prepared to stand by the statement, that in all these three towns, in accordance with the Emperor's edict, the Lutheran books had been publicly denounced, forbidden, and confiscated.' On their return they would inform their sovereign lords of the papal brief and the imperial command, and the Emperor might rely on their full obedience.

By 'assurances of this sort' the commissioners knew how to gain the good graces of the Emperor, who 'had nothing so much at heart as the preservation of the Catholic religion and the unity of the Church.' Substantial tokens of gratitude to the imperial councillors also did good service.[1] The envoys could not, of course, arrive at a final settlement, as all matters were to be decided at a future Diet at Nuremberg. But they had every reason for confident hope. The Emperor gave them secretly to understand that 'he looked with an eye of special favour on the Free Imperial Cities, and that if it were not for the belligerent state of affairs he would act in a more direct and royal

[1] The imperial councillor Hannart received 500 gulden; each of the other three councillors with whom the envoys had dealings was promised 200 gulden. Hannart had promised the envoys 'that he would be a favourable and ready advocate with the Emperor and the Estates in all the complaints of the towns, and would smooth down all prejudice and injustice' (letter of Hamann von Holzhaufen, February 12, 1524, in *Acts of the Diet*, 40, fol. 10).

manner. It was by no means his desire to countenance this customs-duty and to let it come into effect; he wished rather to take the government into his own hands and to appoint an efficient vicegerent and council, so that peace, justice, and good administration might be ensured in the Holy Empire. He wanted so to arrange matters that for the future in cases of monopolies and trading in general, no decrees should be issued independently of his Majesty. All proposals were to be submitted to him first, and what seemed to him not in conformity with justice he would abrogate. To restrict commerce was by no means his intention; if the towns were ready to give him loyal help and subsidies, they might count on gracious and honourable return from him and his representatives, and on the remission of this duty.'

On August 23, 1523, the Emperor gave his councillor Johann Hannart, who was to start for Germany, fuller instructions as to how to deal with the Council and the Estates at the Diet at Nuremberg. These instructions related principally to the four following points: the imperial customs-duty, the crusade against the Turks, the monopolies, the case of Luther and his adherents.

With regard to the new duty, it was said, the Emperor had learnt that the towns were opposed to it 'fiercely and in good earnest,' and that 'no slight resistance, tumult, and sedition' were consequently to be feared if this measure was passed. As, however, in these perilous times he wished above all things for unanimity among the notables, Hannart was to confer with them at the Diet concerning 'other ways and means that would be acceptable to all the Estates, by which

the *Reichsregiment* and *Kammergericht* might be maintained.'

As regards the proposal of a Turkish tax, which had been made at the preceding Diet at Nuremberg, the towns, it seemed from their own statement, could not countenance it; they had declared that they would far rather pay the *gemeiner Pfennig* (common penny). As, however, the reintroduction of this tax would be attended with too much difficulty, and as, in view of the constant nearer approach of the Turks, urgent haste was imperative, the Emperor renewed his request that the supplies volunteered at Worms for the expedition to Rome should be utilised against the infidels.

Concerning the questions of the monopolies and the currency, Hannart was instructed to fall in with the wishes of Estates.

As to Luther and his adherents, the Emperor had no slight misgivings that the edicts which he had issued at Worms, with deliberate counsel, and with the concurrence of all the electors, princes, and notables, had not been carried into effect; he therefore again pressed urgently for their enforcement.

The Diet was fixed for November 11, 1523, but it did not begin till January 14, 1524, and by the end of the month no business of importance had been transacted. The old contention on the question of precedence had been carried on again between the electors of Mayence and Saxony, and the notables might well have struck up the old song, 'Wir sind säumig und strittig und verstehen uns gar nit'[1] ('We are dilatory and quarrelsome,

[1] See Hannart's report to the Emperor, March 13, 1524, in Lanz's *Correspondenz*, i. 102: '... a lon perdu trois sepmaines de temps, avant que lon ait sceu accorder en cecy les parties.'

and do not understand each other at all'). 'It seems to me that things will go very perversely,' wrote home the Frankfort delegate, Hamann von Holzhaufen, at an early date in the proceedings.

According to the imperial injunction provisions were to be made for the maintenance of the *Reichsregiment* and the *Kammergericht*, but it was impossible to arrive at any decision, for the loudest complaints were unanimously raised by the notables against the *Reichsregiment* itself, with whose members nobody would have any more dealings.

The 'first storm' was raised by the allied princes of Treves, the Palatinate, and Hesse against the *personnel* of the Council of Regency for having decreed that the Landgrave Philip of Hesse should restore the possessions he had taken from Frowin von Hutten, an associate of Sickingen's. Doctor Benninger, the Roman jurist, stated, in the name of the princes, that the *Reichsregiment* had not adopted sufficiently serious measures against Sickingen's revolutionary proceedings. Frowin von Hutten, in whose favour the *Reichsregiment* had pronounced an arbitrary judgment without regard to the *Kammergericht*, was notoriously an aider and abettor of Sickingen, as was proved by his letters to Sickingen and to Nickel von Minckwitz, which were now laid before the Council. Frowin had got knowledge of all the secret business transacted by the *Reichsregiment* and at former Diets, and had communicated the intelligence to Sickingen, so that 'the Palatine and the Archbishop of Treves, and their ambassadors, sitting here, had not known so much of what had passed at the Council of Regency and in the Imperial chamber as Franz himself.' The charge against the confederate princes that

they wished to expel the knights and the nobility was quite unjust. 'Their graces had no unjust animosity against them. For this is true: that those members of the nobility who had any sense of honour had kept well in these matters with their graces, and had not been at all pleased with such arbitrary proceedings. What the allied princes had done in resistance to the disturbers of the public peace had been for the good of the whole Empire; for things had come to such a pass that if they had been allowed to proceed it would soon have been impossible to tell who was king, emperor, prince, count, or commoner. It had never entered into the thoughts of the confederate princes to impugn or restrict the majesty of the Emperor, 'for it is known,' said the Roman jurist in the spirit of the old pagan Roman law, 'that he is himself a living law, and above all other law; that His Majesty is as a god on earth, and has the power, as the old saying goes, "*viereckige Dinge zu vergleichen und herwiederum.*"'

In Benninger's speech, wrote the Frankfort delegate on February 1, the *Reichsregiment* was thoroughly picked to pieces, and all that was amiss in it well and clearly pointed out.

The end was that the notables declared 'they would no longer put up with such members as the Council of Regency consisted of.' Only the Elector Frederic of Saxony spoke in favour of the *Reichsregiment*, and, as he could not obtain a hearing, he rode away from Nuremberg on February 26. 'It is the wish of all the electors, princes, and estates,' wrote the Frankfort delegate on the day of the Elector Frederic's departure, 'not to have a Council of Regency any longer.' On this point all the Free and Imperial cities also had been

unanimous at the Diet of Spires. But now Nuremberg was falling off from this resolution, because 'each one was seeking his own profit;' Ulm too 'showed signs of contrariness.' These two cities had given occasion to its being said of all the cities, that they were disunited and divided into two parties; this, however, was not the case at the present juncture.

The towns also, on their own account, sent in a petition of grievances against the Council of Regency 'couched in hard and sharp language,' complaining that the Council had been guilty of arbitrary encroachments on municipal rights, liberties, and ordinances, which could only tend to produce disobedience to ruling authorities, tumult, and sedition. Duke George of Saxony said that the Council was indifferent to imperial and princely dignity, for it suffered Luther to call the princes rascals and knaves with impunity, and to encourage disobedience to imperial mandates. The Bishop of Würzburg charged the Council with open partisanship of the new doctrines: it had granted liberty to two canons whom he had cited before the ecclesiastical court because they had married; and it had granted a safe-conduct to a prebendary who had been obliged to make his escape for having taught erroneous doctrine.

'It is certainly true,' wrote Hannart to the Emperor, 'that most of the members of the Council are strong Lutherans, and that they have often shown themselves immoderate and unguarded in their proceedings.'

It thus became clear to every one that the present members of the Council could not be allowed to continue in office; as to what sort of administrative body was to

take the place of the existing one, however, opinions and desires were widely asunder.

'Some wished, in conformity with the archducal vicegerent and the imperial orator Hannart, that the Council should retain its present constitution, but that there should be a change of members. Others agreed with the proposal of the Palatine Elector that whenever the Emperor was not present in the Empire the *Kurpfalz* should exercise his viceregal rights; the majority wished to do away with the Council altogether; many spoke of the election of a Roman king, adding a clause for the exclusion of the House of Austria. And thus all was division and discontent, and it seemed as if no imperial business whatever would be transacted at this Diet, and as if there was reason to despair of the future of the Empire.'

The notables themselves were almost distracted by the dissensions that prevailed among them.

'Each prince and other notable of the Empire,' writes Hannart, 'says it is a judgment of God upon them that they cannot come to an understanding regarding the urgent needs of the country.' 'I am very much afraid,' he adds, 'that if they do not alter their behaviour, these words of theirs will prove prophetic, and that chastisement will indeed overtake them. The most terrible casualties are of daily occurrence, now here, now there, throughout the Empire, and if the Diet breaks up without having settled anything, complete lawlessness will set in, and such a contingency, added to the continually increasing spread of the execrable Lutheran sect, will unavoidably produce violent commotions.' Even those princes who had hitherto been loyal to the Emperor had grown discontented and refractory, because they had

waited in vain for the imperial pensions that had been promised them: if the money was not paid to them, they now declared, they would not be in a position to render further good service, or to testify their love of the Emperor by undertaking expensive journeys to Diets. Hannart begged repeatedly that the Emperor would at any rate send the promised sums to the former vicegerent, the Count Palatine Frederic, and keep him by this means well affected to the imperial cause. Frederic had unlimited influence over his brother, the Elector Palatine, who was at this moment moving heaven and earth to prevent the continuance of the *Reichsregiment* and to be himself appointed vicegerent of the Empire. If, however, the Council of Regency, and with it the vicegerency of the Archduke Ferdinand —in fact, all the organisation established at Worms— were abolished, the friends and promoters of the *Reichsvicariat* would have little trouble in reducing the present Diet to complete incapacity, in convoking a fresh Diet in the Rhine district, and establishing there a new central government entirely to their own liking. The secret machinations of the French king ought to be kept seriously in view in respect of all these matters.'

Already before the beginning of the Diet, Francis I. had been endeavouring to persuade several electors and princes that, since the Emperor was in Spain, and the Empire as it were in a state of orphanage, they ought to set up a Roman king; he, on his part, was quite ready to accept the crown, supposing the choice should fall on him, and he would prove his gratitude munificently by gifts and favours; but if the princes should prefer to elect one of their own countrymen, he recommended the Margrave Joachim of Brandenburg

as the fittest man; the Count Palatine Ludwig was also worthy of consideration for his distinguished qualifications; but in any case, for the welfare of Germany, the choice must not fall on the brother of the Emperor. The new Roman king must then, in return for large subsidies, unite his arms to the arms of France in order to fight against Charles of Spain, who was endeavouring to crush the freedom of Germany and to subjugate the whole world and reduce it to bondage.

Intrigues of this sort were not without effect.

'I have been informed,' wrote Hannart to the Emperor on March 13, 'that plots are brewing among several of the princes with regard to your Majesty's absence from the Empire:' they make out 'that they cannot be well governed when their head is not in the country; there has been a talk of the King of France, because the latter is able to pay more than any one else. As, however, they see that they cannot well elect him, it has occurred to the Count Palatine and the Margrave to try, each for himself, if either of them could get himself elected Roman king; the Archduke Ferdinand they none of them think fit for the post; they say he is still too young, and that under him they would fare even worse than now, as he would be completely led by Salamanca, one of his councillors.' Hannart complained especially of the Margrave, who 'had little good feeling for the affairs of the Empire.' 'It will soon be seen,' he said, 'that the liking he has for the French on account of their florins, and in view of the hand of the Princess Renata for his son, makes him forgetful of his duty and obligations.'[1]

[1] Lanz, *Correspondenz*, i. 105, 106–107. For the rest Hannart did not fear the proposals '. . . joint que les electeurs ne sont tous dune opinion, sarchant chacun son particulier interest.'

The Archbishop Richard of Treves lay under suspicion of having become 'friendly with the King of France,' and of having obtained from the latter the money for the magnificent display which he made at the Diet.[1] The Dukes Wilhelm and Ludwig of Bavaria also, it was said, 'were subsidised by the French king, and hence their increasingly strong objections to the House of Austria;' they had come to the Diet, so the Palatine Elector's party asserted, in order to supplant the imperial House of Habsburg and to procure the Roman imperial and royal crown for themselves.[1]

It was in connection with these multitudinous plottings and intrigues of the French king, that the princes formed a resolution at the Diet to send a deputation, first to Francis I., and then to the Emperor and the King of England, in order to treat for peace between the belligerents. For this purpose the Elector of Treves, the Count Palatine Frederic, and the Duke Ludwig of Bavaria were to betake themselves to the French Court with dazzling pomp, and the Elector was to remain with the King. It cost the Archduke Ferdinand and the imperial ambassador untold trouble to prevent 'this unconstitutional interference of the Estates without previous consent of the Emperor.'[2]

'What would have happened at the French Court, supposing the deputation had arrived there,' writes Carl

[1] See Hannart's report in Lanz, i. 100–101.

[2] Hannart's report in Lanz, i. 125. Ehmel, Archduke Ferdinand's instructions for Charles of Burgundy to Herr zu Bredam, June 13, 1524: 'Hec legatio sola suffecisset interrumpere felicem cursum rerum majestatis suae.' The King of France carries on 'miras practicas inter ipsius imperii principes et principalia membra' . . . 'non cessat dies et noctes non solum in Germania, sed etiam in plerisque aliis regnis et locis practicare, sperans insidiis assequi quod jam pridem armis obtinere nequivit' (p. 107).

von Bodmann, 'can easily be estimated from the known attitude of the princes. The peace conditions which they were likely to have proposed would scarcely have had any other result than to procure allies for the French king in the very heart of the Empire.'[1]

The Emperor thanked his brother for having stopped the deputation being sent. This embassy, he said, 'would not have conduced to his own honour, but to the glory of the French king; it was all the less necessary, moreover, because the Pope was making such strenuous exertions to bring about peace, or a truce, and the whole matter lay in his hands; the Pope, with this object in view, had sent his nuncio, the Archbishop of Capua, to him, the Emperor, to the King of France, and to the King of England.'

The French intrigues were shipwrecked for the present on the rock of the Archduke's firmness.

Ferdinand's exertions with regard to the *Reichsregiment* were also so far efficacious that the notables, after lengthy debates, agreed to sanction the continuance of the Council for two years more, provided that all the present members were sent away on leave and called to account.

If the Archduke and the ambassador would not agree to this, 'the electors, princes, and other deputies would be compelled to break up the assembly, for they had been long enough already over this business.' The new Council was to be convoked at Spires, or Frankfort, or some other town, and to be reorganised after an improved plan. Among the improvements suggested

[1] Letter of May 26, 1524. Bucholtz, ii. 51. Concerning the Emperor's peace negotiations see the report of his ambassador, Gerard de Plume, August 20, 1524, Lanz, *Correspondenz*, i. 143–144.

by a committee of the notables, the first was 'that the Council should allow all the estates of the Empire, both high and low, to retain their sovereign prerogatives, their liberties, customs, and traditions, and their jurisdictions.'

'But, as they are all quarrelling together again,' wrote a bystander, 'it is not to be wondered at that, as one hears, there is no agreement between the imperial lieutenant and the imperial ambassador, and that the Archduke, on the contrary, complains fiercely of Hannart.'

Such, in fact, was the case.

'The wishes of all,' wrote Ferdinand to the Emperor, 'were set on the abolition of the *Reichsregiment*, and they all used wonderful skill and cunning to accomplish this end. The result, however, would have been that your Majesty's dignity would have been almost entirely overthrown, an open rebellion would have broken out in the Empire, and the Germans would have swarmed over to the French side.' Hannart, he said, had behaved ill in the transactions. He had led the Electors of Treves and of the Palatinate, and the Landgrave of Hesse, to hope that the Council would be done away with; and he had disclosed his secret instructions to the Elector of Treves. 'All that I was attempting to carry through, and all that I was opposing, as well for the maintenance of your Majesty's dignity as for the peace and welfare of this nation, was communicated in full to the opposition party, although I had only conferred with a few of my most trusted councillors. This caused me great distress, although I managed to conceal my annoyance, and it tortured my feelings far more than Hannart's treacherous conduct; he was scarcely willing to treat me as a vicegerent, and behaved more like

a bragging soldier than a grave ambassador. I could have borne the annoyance better if any gain for our affairs had resulted from it; but how far the opposite of this was the case, I will not relate to your Majesty in detail, for it would be too long and doleful a tale for you to hear. I will only just mention this much, that he let himself be drawn so unreservedly to the side of the town party that he agreed to, and no doubt also guaranteed them, concessions which must never be accorded to them so long as your Majesty's position in Germany is prosperous and assured.' [1]

After the consent of the Estates had been given to the continuance of the *Reichsregiment*, the next question again was, how to raise the money for its maintenance.

The imperial customs-duty, which had been proposed for this purpose, was 'in a lamentable manner allowed to remain in abeyance.' 'This, indeed, had been principally effected by the towns, though some of the princes and their councillors were also to blame, and it was a contingency by no means conducive to the welfare of the Empire.' Ferdinand's proposal, that the Estates should be taxed according to the plan of the old *Matrikel*, was rejected, as was also his proposal that the Emperor should undertake one half of the work and the Estates defray the other half. 'On reasonable grounds, and on account of palpable grievances,' the Estates declared on March 18 'that they could not agree to give anything to the support of the Council.' If the Emperor insisted on keeping it up, let him pay its expenses himself. Only on the condition that the constitution of the Council should be improved in the ways desired,

[1] Bucholtz, ii. 45–46, 52.

and that none of the present members should be appointed to the new Council, would the electors and princes agree to the Estates undertaking half the costs of maintenance.

But now the town delegates became obstructive. At the very commencement of the Diet they had handed in a document to the effect that they had orders not to take part in any imperial business until their claims to a seat and a voice had been complied with. Accordingly they said they would only take part in this transaction under the proviso that they would give nothing if their sovereign lords and friends were not to be considered one of the Estates of the realm, and were to have no voice and seat at the *Reichsregiment*. On April 2 they received the following answer: 'Until the Emperor returned to the Empire and himself conferred with the notables on this matter, the towns were to be allowed two representatives, with one vote between the two, and this vote was to follow after those of the counts and lords, but also, like the other Estates, they were to vote without reservations.' But this concession did not satisfy them. As the greater number of the town delegates had already left the day before, they replied that they could not give a final answer, and that they would submit the matter to them.[1] They were heard to say 'that they were not willing to pay any money for the Council.'

The *Reichsregiment* was to be removed to Eisleben; but the money needed for its maintenance was not forthcoming in any direction, and in 1524 it seemed on the verge of dissolution.

In the matter of monopolies nothing substantial was

[1] See von Höfler, *Deutsches Städtewesen*, p. 222.

done at the Diet; the old prohibitions were merely renewed with injunctions that they were to be 'carried out as speedily as possible, in a regular manner, according to law.' Neither was any satisfactory result arrived at with regard to the trading associations, although the town delegates had promised on this occasion, with the help of the other Estates, 'to abolish all great companies.' So much time had been spent in discussing and quarrelling over the *Reichsregiment* that none was left for other business, and, 'as usual, everything was postponed to future Diets.' It was agreed that half of the aids promised at Worms for the expedition to Rome should be used for opposing the Turks, but it was predicted by one of those present on the occasion that 'it would be seen in the future that mighty little of this half would come to hand.'

Everything seemed tending to bring on the disintegration of the Empire.

In a most melancholy description of the state of German affairs sent by him to his brother, Ferdinand said that his vicegerency brought more degradation than profit to the Emperor, for it was only an empty title, without authority or means; in the assemblies of the Diet the Vicegerent was of no more importance than any one of the princes' agents; in the *Reichsregiment* he was bound at every step to secure the consent of the Council; 'he would be of much more use to the Emperor and to the House of Austria if he sat on the Council not as Vicegerent, but simply as Austrian Archduke.' Everything had become complicated and confused; the Estates were enormously influenced by the French king, and how little they cared for the preservation of the Empire had been sufficiently shown at

the Diet. The necessary means for the maintenance of the *Reichsregiment* and the *Kammergericht* would not be granted, and if the Emperor did not provide suitable administration in the land at his own expense, and was not empowered to reform the *Kammergericht* and *Reichsregiment* with able men of his own choice, either the *Reichsvicariat*, which the Palatine Elector had urged at the Diet, or a purely representative government, would be established, and the end of it would be, under the agitated condition of the whole country, that a new sovereign would be forced on them either by the electors or by the nation itself. For it must not be concealed from the Emperor that a strong feeling was taking root among the people that the custom of letting the German sovereigns be chosen by a few 'purchasable' men must be abolished, and that at any rate the ecclesiastical electors should be got rid of. No one could tell but that if things went on as they had done hitherto, some candidate or other, backed up by the voice of the people, or by French intrigues, might be set up on the throne. If the Emperor wished to prevent the threatened downfall of Germany, he should exert all his power to provide the Empire with a head. Would he not, Ferdinand begged, before going back to Spain, fulfil the promise he had made of his own accord, and at once, before it was too late, appoint him, Ferdinand, to be King of Rome? If the Empire was not furnished with a head, it was to be feared, in view of the many aspirants to the crown, fed systematically by the benevolence of France, and the constantly increasing religious disturbances, that the German nation would come to a suicidal end.'[1]

[1] '. . . Timendum sit, ne ipsa natio, quam Exteri non possunt opprimere

The progress of the religious disturbances became notoriously evident at the Diet of Nuremberg.

Pope Clement VII. had sent Cardinal Lorenzo Campeggio as nuncio to Germany to treat with the Imperial Estates about the Turkish crusade, the means of calming down the religious disturbance, and the grievances of the laity against the Papal Chair.[1]

Campeggio had been sent thither once before in the same capacity in the reign of the Emperor Maximilian, and he had then been received by the people everywhere with the respect due to his position. Now, however, he found 'quite a different sort of Germany.' On his entry into Augsburg, when, according to traditional custom, he raised his hands to give the blessing, he was derided by the populace, and represented afterwards in a caricature as a strange sort of animal sent from Rome for the annoyance of Germany.[2] Before he made his entry into Nuremberg the Council of Regency intimated to him that he had better omit the blessing and the sign of the cross, 'seeing how things stood.' It was feared that he might be maltreated by the mob.

viribus suis, sibi ipsi sit plus quam intestinum malum paritura, nec secus, ac si quisque sibi manum consciret' (Ehmel, Ferdinand's Instructions, p. 107).

[1] 'Nos certe,' so the Pope promised the States, 'in omnibus quae per nos, Deo interveniente, fieri poterunt, neque amore, neque studio, neque liberalitate deerimus.' See the Pope's despatch to Campeggio of April 14, 1524 (Balar, pp. 326–329).

[2] See Uhlhorn, pp. 58–59. With regard to the wide spread of the new doctrines among the people, one who accompanied Cardinal Campeggio said in a letter from Nuremberg, March 29, 1524, 'Li soli principi et parte zentilhomeni, excepto el duca de Saxonia et conte Palatino, sono sinceri Christiani' (Thomas, *Luther und die Reformationsbewegung*, 45—No. 85).

He could not help wondering, Campeggio said publicly before an assembly of all the Estates of the Empire, that so many princes and other estates should allow this new teaching to be spread abroad, and the faith of our fathers to be destroyed by the writings of a handful of people: there could be no other result than insubordination, and revolt of the people against all authority. He had full authority from the Pope to consult with the Estates as to the best method of examining into these things, and remedying the existing evils. He had not come, as was falsely asserted, to 'deal out fire and sword,' but it was his Papal Holiness's command, and his own wish and intention, to devise merciful and fatherly ways by which the renegades, or heretics, might be induced to return to the fold. To which he was answered as follows: 'The new doctrines which were then being disseminated were not liked by the princes and the authorities in the Empire; they could also well understand what disastrous results might ensue from them. The Estates were ready to confer with him on this matter, and he was at liberty to make any proposals he liked; first of all, however, they would like to hear what instructions he had received concerning the gravamina sent in by the German nation in the preceding year.'

The Nuremberg petition of grievances of the year 1523 had been printed again and again in Germany before it had been sent to Rome. The Pope, Campeggio said, had taken no official notice of it; three copies of the document had found their way to Rome, having been sent to private persons; he himself had seen one of these copies, but had not believed that anything so egregiously indecorous could have been drawn up by the

Imperial Senate; he had, indeed, looked upon it as the outcome of some private individual's hatred of the Roman See. He had no orders at all concerning this document, but he had full power to treat with the Estates concerning the grievances of the nation. In his opinion the Germans ought to follow the example of the Spaniards: the latter had sent a deputation to Rome, and had stated all their wishes, and had at last obtained redress, wherever it was possible; he did not doubt that the German nation also would obtain from the Pope all that could be granted them consistently with honour. But it was not suitable that matters of this sort should be discussed openly, in print, under the eyes of the common people. It was only by laying aside religious feuds that Germany could be restored to tranquillity, and recover the power to protect itself against the Turks, to whom the gates of the empire now stood wide open.

Resistance to the Turks was certainly, as the notables had said, the concern of all Christendom, and unity between Christian nations was hence imperatively necessary. In view of this the Pope was exerting himself to bring about peace between the Emperor and France and England, and to the same end he had sent him (Campeggio) 'to conclude peace with the Estates.' He, on his part, was ready to do all in his power to further this end. But if he was not listened to, the Pope must have patience and leave the matter in God's hands.

The secular Estates then handed in the list of grievances, and this time there was no mention of the faith or the Church system. It was expressly stated that neither the ecclesiastics, who were bound by oath to the Pope, nor the princes and secular Estates,

were in any way minded to curtail the pontifical authority. But all that was reprehensible in morals and all corrupt practices must be reformed—above all the many abuses which, as nobody could deny, arose partly from unlimited papal bounties, and partly from the unwarranted extortions of the officials of the Roman Curia.

To the class of well-founded grievances belonged the following, among others: that many holders of bishoprics had for a long time past not been required to receive consecration; that bishops were appointed at Rome and absolved from residence within their dioceses; that the German bishops bound themselves by an oath to visit the sepulchres of the apostles every two years, or else to purchase absolution from this obligation by money.

One chief cause of complaint related to the permission granted by the Pope to the Archduke Ferdinand to use a third part of the ecclesiastical rents for defence against the Turks. The granting of this permission, the secular Estates insisted, was contrary to the common rights of the nation, to the decrees of councils, and to the institutions and liberties of a civilised people, first because it had been done without any discussion of the matter, and secondly, because the immovable possessions of the Church, which had been consecrated to the glory of God by emperors, kings, and princes, both spiritual and secular, and by other faithful Christians, should remain as fixtures in the Church, and should not and could not be alienated from it without the consent of those who had bestowed them for ecclesiastical uses. The funds of the churches were quite exhausted, and if this measure of the Pope's was carried out they would not be in a position to pay the imperial taxes; if the

inalienable Church property was trafficked with in this fashion, it would be impossible to defray the expenses of colleges, cloisters, and other endowed institutions. They had, therefore, resolved not to tolerate that anybody should be tyrannised over by bulls of this sort, obtained from the Pope by Ferdinand or others, or issued of His Holiness's own accord; in such unjustifiable emergencies they were not bound to yield obedience to the Pope.

Shortly after this, however, many of these grumbling deputies claimed for themselves permission and right to seize all Church and monastic property.

'The chapter of grievances is interminably long,' wrote Carl von Bodmann, 'and in many things it is well founded; but the secular Estates do not appear to be aware of the grievances which they themselves inflict on the Church by their frequent appointment of unsuitable and unworthy people to clerical posts, by their meddling with things purely ecclesiastical, and by many others of their proceedings. If only they do not proceed to take upon themselves the settling of Church doctrine and to place the decision on controverted points of faith in the hands of their secular jurists and other mundane councillors! For the matter of that, however, there are many people whose one idea is to establish their right to settle for themselves what is and what is not to be believed; the town magistrates especially are in hopes that with the acquisition of all the Church goods they will also get all ecclesiastical authority into their own hands.' The truth of this last statement was clearly manifested at the Nuremberg Diet.

Most of the electors and princes who were present at this Diet showed a disposition to obey the Emperor's command that, in matters concerning the new doctrine,

the Edict of Worms should be enforced. The town delegates, on the other hand, were of quite another mind. At the audience granted them by the Emperor in Spain, the latter had repudiated all charges of favouring Luther, and it was chiefly by their assurances concerning Church matters that they had induced Charles not to consent to the introduction of the new imperial customs-duty. Now, after the duty had been given up, the towns showed their true colours. Their delegates, for the most part Roman jurists, announced that they could not give their assent to the demands of the electors and princes in the Lutheran matter; the measures proposed by them would provoke much tumult, insubordination, slaughter, and bloodshed among the common people. The right course, in view of the existing heresies, would be to convene a general free Christian assembly of persons, both of clerical and secular estate, and to leave them to deliberate as to what was best to be done with regard to the Gospel and the Word of God, pending the convocation of a general free Council. Such an assembly would be conducive to a unanimous Christian understanding, and would be the most suitable means of calming down much contention, and of restoring quiet among the common people. The following amendment was proposed on the Edict of Worms: 'Where any one of Christian profession preaches any doctrine, and pretends to prove it by the Old and the New Testament, he must be left alone, unless he is proved wrong by some one else out of the Scripture. If then he refuses to be convinced, he must be punished in a suitable manner.'

'Proposals of this sort,' wrote Clemens Endes,

'seemed to many of the other deputies, and not only to ecclesiastical ones, very astonishing.' But 'they hurried on to the conclusion of the Diet.' And 'in hot haste, on April 18, a *Reichsabschied* was written out, in which regard was had to the wishes of the towns, in order that the latter might not carry out their threat of openly protesting.

This *Reichsabschied* contained irreconcilable contradictions.[1]

In it the notables declared that they were bound, according to the imperial command, 'as much as they were able, to live in conformity with and obediently to the Edict of Worms'—that is to say, to maintain and to protect the Catholic Church. With regard to printed matter they would abide by the earlier mandate.[2]

They stipulated for a general council to be convoked in Germany, and expressed their thanks to the legate for his promise to submit this demand to the Pope and to do his best to obtain the papal consent. But they refused to wait for the decisions of this council concerning the disputed points of doctrine, saying that they would themselves settle what line of action should be taken in this matter pending the meeting of the general council. They proposed that a list should be drawn up of all disputed points in the new doctrines and books by expert and intelligent councillors, and laid before a general representative assembly of the German nation, which was to be held at Spires on November 11. All the notables were either to be present in person at this

[1] See P. Balan, pp. 339-348; Papal instructions for the nuncio at the Imperial Court, at the end of April 1524; and the brief to the Archduke Ferdinand of May 11.

[2] See above, vol. iii. p. 330.

assembly, or else to send competent representatives, invested with full power to come to a final decision. Meanwhile the holy Gospel and the Word of God were to be preached, without tumult and scandal, according to the right and true interpretation and the teaching recognised by the Catholic Church.[1]

The *Reichsabschied* of the Diet, which was published in the Empire as an edict of the Emperor's, gave satisfaction to neither side.

Luther was wildly incensed by it. He published it himself, together with the earlier Edict of Worms, and with a preface and epilogue, in which he attacked the Emperor and the princes in more virulent language than ever before.

'It is abominable,' he wrote, 'that Emperor and princes should deal openly in lies, but it is more abominable still that they should at one and the same time send forth contradictory orders, as you herein see; for it is enjoined that I should be dealt with according to the ban which was issued at Worms, and that the decrees of this ban are to be rigorously carried out; and nevertheless side by side with this decree is the opposite one, that it will only be decided at a future Diet at Spires what is good and what bad in my teaching. Thus I am at the same time condemned, and remanded to a future tribunal; and the German people are at one and the same time to persecute me as a criminal, and to wait till I am sentenced. These princes must be either drunk or mad. Go to! go to! we Germans must remain Germans, and the Pope's asses and martyrs; although they should grind us, as Solomon says, like grits in a mortar, yet will not folly depart from among us.

[1] See Baumgarten, ii. 522; Egelhaaf, i. 522.

God Almighty, I perceive, has not given me reasonable people to deal with, but I am to be slain by German wild beasts, if I am worthy of it, just as if wolves or savage boars tore me in pieces. Verily a calamity is nigh at hand, and God's wrath is going over you, and you will not be able to escape from it, fly whithersoever you will. What think you, my dear sirs? God is too clever for you; he has quickly made fools of you. He is also mighty; he has soon overthrown you. Tremble then a little before his great wisdom, which, for all you know, may have put these thoughts and wickednesses into your heart, that they may lead you to destruction; as indeed he is wont to do with great rulers, according to the words of Psalm xxxiii. 10, "The Lord bringeth the council of the heathen to nought," and of St. Luke i. 52, "He hath put down the mighty from their seats." That fits you exactly, dear sirs, now at this moment, please to understand.'

Luther goes on to admonish the people to contribute help for fighting the Turks. 'I beg of you all, dear Christians, that you will join to pray to God for those miserable blinded princes, whom no doubt God Himself has placed over us as a curse, because we do not come forward to resist the Turks or to give money; for the Turks are ten times cleverer and more pious than are our princes.' He made it out also to be blasphemy of the Divine Majesty that the Emperor, in his position of temporal protector of the Church, should, according to century-long custom, call himself the chief Protector of the Christian faith. 'Shamelessly,' he says, 'does the Emperor boast of this, he who after all is but a perishable bag of worms and not sure of his life for one moment. God help us! how insensate the world is! So too the King of England

vaunts himself that he is a protector of the Christian Church and faith. Yea, verily the Hungarians boast of being the defenders of God, and sing in their Litany, "Thou wilt hear us, thy defenders." For all this I implore all pious Christians from the bottom of my heart that, with me, they would lament over such mad, idiotic, senseless, raving, pig-headed fools. I would ten times liefer be dead than hear such blasphemy and insolence against the Divine Majesty. Yea, it is their well-deserved reward that they should be suffered to persecute the Word of God'—namely, Luther's gospel. 'For this they are to be punished with the curse of blindness, and they will be sent to the right about. God deliver us from them, and give us, in his mercy, other rulers. Amen.'[1]

'Can a man who writes thus, and represents the Emperor and the princes to the people as blind, stiff-necked, raving fools,' asks an orthodox believer with regard to this pamphlet, 'can such a one say truly of himself that he is not stirring up the populace and making it rebellious against all authority?'

The Legate Campeggio and the Pope at once entered a protest against the appointment of a court of jurisdiction at Spires, to decide the questions of faith independently of the Pope. To the Archduke Ferdinand also it seemed incomprehensible that the Estates should presume to sit in judgment on the Holy Father and the Councils.

Ferdinand informed the Emperor by letter that since his departure from the Empire the condition of religious affairs had grown immeasurably worse, and that social

[1] *Collected Works of Luther*, xxiv. 211–213, 236–237.

life was alarmingly convulsed by reason of the religious anarchy. The sectarians, he said, with the gospel of peace on their lips, were everywhere intent only on spreading discord: by the circulation of leaflets in the German language, the people were being incensed not only against the Pope and the bishops, who were denounced as servants of the Devil, but also against the holy Sacraments and all the teaching of the Church; pamphlets had even appeared written against the divinity of Christ. Under the cloak of the Gospel open robbery was practised; sedition and civil warfare were growing rampant. His daily observations filled him with dire apprehension for the welfare of the community, which was so closely bound up with religion, and for the German nation, now threatened with ruin. Ferdinand implored the Emperor, as he had already implored the Pope, to lay aside all private contentions and to hasten to the help of the Christian nations in their common adversity, above all to push on the reform of the clergy. Let the Emperor bethink himself what he owed to God, from whom he had received his imperial dignity and so many dominions; what to the Church as her supreme protector; and what to the German nation, from whose body had sprung the cancerous evil which was corroding other nations also. As for the 'General Assembly of the German Nation,' which it had been decided, at the Nuremberg Diet, to convene at Spires, he begged the Emperor to put his veto upon it in so far as it intended to deal not only with imperial business but with the Lutheran case and matters of faith; it was not fitting that the secular Estates should sit in judgment on the Fathers of the Church and the Councils, and the truth of the Gospel did not belong to the German

nation only, but to the whole world, and must therefore be deliberated on at an Œcumenical Council, and not before a presumptuously convened tribunal of German Imperial States.

Finally he begged the Emperor to assure his German subjects that he would get the Pope to convoke an Œcumenical Council with all possible speed.

The demands made by Ferdinand with regard to the religious convention at Spires corresponded entirely with the Emperor's own convictions. Charles instantly issued a stern prohibitory mandate (July 15, 1524) against the assembly at which it was proposed 'that judgment should be pronounced concerning the settlement of religious matters, and a verdict given by learned men on disputed articles of faith.' The Emperor also expressed his displeasure at the notables having arranged with the legate in their own names for the meeting of this assembly, 'as if such an affair were more their business than that of the Pope or the Roman Emperor;' he promised further to ask the Pope to have a council summoned as soon as he himself should be able to be present at it; meanwhile he desired that the Estates would conform strictly to the Edict of Worms, and keep clear of all religious innovations under pain of being convicted of *lèse-majesté* and punished by the imperial ban.

Even before the issue of this imperial mandate, the strenuous exertions of the Legate Campeggio and the Archduke Ferdinand had been effectual in bringing about a union between the Archduke himself, who was a specially zealous opponent of the new doctrines, the Dukes Wilhelm and Ludwig of Bavaria, and twelve

South German bishops.[1] These persons also pledged themselves, as far as lay in their power, to enforce the decrees of the Diet of Worms and to oppose all innovations in religious matters within their own territories.

They would allow no changes, they said, to be introduced in the divine services; the renegade monks and nuns, and the apostate married priests should be punished with all the severity of ecclesiastical law; the regulations for fasts should be enforced; the writings of schismatics, and all libellous and abusive books should be suppressed; all men under their jurisdictions, studying in Wittenberg, should be required to return to their homes under penalty of forfeiting their benefices and heritages; and anybody who was expelled from one principality on account of heresy should not be allowed to take refuge in any other. By means of the above-mentioned alliance the temporal and spiritual princes hoped to maintain unimpaired the religious unity of the German nation, and to insure the internal tranquillity of their dominions. 'And if anything adverse should happen to one or more of us on account of this our Christian undertaking, or any disobedience or insurrection should occur among our subjects, we promise to help and advise one another.' 'But herein we exclude,' they subjoined, 'all alliances, leagues, and treaties that we may have made with other princes or with any one else, in all truth and fidelity.'

By this alliance, in which they hoped gradually to include all the collective body of orthodox notables, the princes intended not merely to combat ecclesiastical revolt in their own dominions, but also to be active in promoting a true reformation. A scheme for redress

[1] See note at p. 360 of German original (17th and 18th ed.)

of abuses and restoration of clerical chastity, which had already been submitted to the Nuremberg Diet by the Legate, was discussed during the space of sixteen days, and finally passed as '*Reformation wie es hinfüro die Priester halten sollen.*'[1] No priest was to be consecrated without a previous strict examination, and none was to be allowed to preach who was not sufficiently qualified for the work by his life and his learning; the priests were to live in conformity with their position, and to dress in accordance with it; not to frequent taverns, theatres, and banquets; to abstain from all commercial pursuits; not to withhold the sacraments or Church burial from anybody on account of any debts whatever, and not to take any fees for confession. Benefices and clerical offices were no longer to be purchasable, and indulgences were not to be proclaimed without leave from the bishop of the diocese. The number of saints' days was diminished; restrictions were put on the use of the ban and the interdict; the fasting command was to be enjoined under the head of obedience to the Church, and no longer, as before, on pain of excommunication. In order to give force to these enactments a synod, according to ancient custom, was to be held in every bishopric, and the ecclesiastical province to assemble every three years at a provincial council; at which times the bishops were to confer with the secular princes, lords, and ruling authorities concerning the execution of the articles of reform. All persons accused of heresy were to be delivered over by the secular magistrates, without infliction of a penalty, to the ecclesiastical courts for trial.[2]

[1] 'Reformation which the priests are in future to abide by.'

[2] 'Constitutio ad removendos abusus et ordinatio ad vitam cleri reformandam. . . . Ratisbonae edita anno 1524.' See Le Plat, ii. 226 *sqq.*

These articles contained nothing new, but coincided in all essentials with the old regulations of former councils and synods. Campeggio had, indeed, expressly stated at the Diet at Nuremberg that no new rules were wanted for clerical reform; it was only a question of faithful observance of those already existing.

But such faithful observance was of rare occurrence.

'Already before the appearance of the new sects,' wrote the orthodox Carl von Bodmann on July 27, 1524, 'there were enough of punishable doings, iniquities, and anomalies among the secular and monastic clergy, and there is nothing that these sects have made so much capital out of for the furtherance of their cause as the sins of the clergy. But the rapidity with which insubordination and immorality have increased since the proclamation of the so-called new gospel is almost incredible, so that the clergy of to-day are widely different in conduct and in morals from those of former times. The laxity and indifference of many of our bishops are quite inconceivable; in spite of all that they see going on around them they persist in their luxury and pomp, and not seldom lay themselves open to the reproach that they care less to feed their flocks than to fleece them. Is it, perhaps, that they are bent on enjoying their good things to the uttermost while they still can, because they have an inkling that they are soon going to lose them?' The Dominican Johann Dietenberger speaks in no milder terms in a letter of the year 1524 to the Archbishop of Treves concerning the bishops. 'When you, Luther, complain,' he says, 'that the young friars are not instructed by the bishops

either in the faith or concerning the kingdom of God, I can only say, may this become as false as it is now true!' 'But,' he proceeds ironically, 'it may perhaps be urged in excuse for the bishops, that the cares attending their outward circumstances, such as collecting, amassing, procuring, and increasing riches, such as building fine palaces and equipping themselves for war, such as defending their acres, their cities, their country estates, their provinces—for the sake of which they occasionally go forth in pomp to battle—that all these cares occupy and engross them so completely that they can scarcely make pretence to the name of bishop, still less fulfil the duties of the episcopal office.'[1]

In the matter of outward good living things had grown very much worse with many of the bishops than at the time when Christoph von Stadion, Bishop of Augsburg, said in open synod, 'At the tables of men who grab for themselves the episcopal and other high dignities of the Church, one tastes the choicest wines and dainties, procured at immense cost from the most distant lands, and heaped up to tempt the vitiated clerical palates. Servants stand in large numbers behind these gluttonising dignitaries of the Church; some hand round the eatables, others pour out the exquisite wines; some kindle the frankincense, others set the fans in motion. I can scarcely refrain from tears when I think of those dignitaries of the Church who live only for the flesh, who shun solitude, piety, and humility, and who love women, commerce, lawsuits, and lucre.' A writer describing an archery tournament held in Heidelberg (June 1524) by secular and spiritual princes says:

[1] H. Wedewer, *Life and Works of Johannes Dietenberger*, 1475-1537, p. 301.

'Much extravagant frivolity was carried on, to the offence of the people, by several bishops who were in the habit of dancing and making merry in public. They were mostly lords of high birth, who did not care at all for the popular distress at the current heresies, nor for the need of the Church; and yet this need was very great.'[1]

And now, in the time of sore need and distress, it became patent to everybody what it meant for the Church that the highest ecclesiastical offices and dignities were, as a rule, in the hands of younger sons of princely and noble families, and that the princes were thus able to gain so many bishops and archbishops to their side.[2]

Towards the Church the princes had pursued the same policy of self-seeking, and self-aggrandisement, as that with which they were in a fair way to ruin the Empire. The heaviest woes of the Church and the worst evils and abuses in ecclesiastical matters sprang from the policy of the princes.

'And then,' said Carl von Bodmann, 'the princes rise up and bring complaint after complaint against the clergy, the greater part of whom forsooth they have themselves, by every artifice in their power, placed in their posts and benefices; they blame the Church, to which they have themselves given the Judas kiss.'

The fatal system of setting seculars over monasteries

[1] F. D. Häberlin (x. 620–621), *Die allgemeine Welt-Historie*. . . . The papal nuncio Chieregati wrote from the Diet of Nuremberg on November 22, 1522: 'Questi Cardinali, Vescovi et Archivescovi vanno in volta in salti, in balli così togati, come sono, et dicono, che sono Principi, et quando ballano et danzono, chel Pontificato dorme. . . .' (O. Redlich, *Der Reichstag von Nürnberg*, 1522–1523, 86, note 1. Leipzig, 1887.)

[2] See our statements (15th and 16th ed.), pp. 632–635; English translation, ii. 292–295.

was considered right and lawful, as emanating from the sovereignty of the princes, and was encouraged by the Roman jurists; not only were retired princely officials appointed by the so-called Bread-letters to life-posts in churches and cloisters—where, by the way, they were often guilty of 'strange irregularities which brought disrepute on the cloisters'—but also during the hunting seasons 'huntsmen, falconers, grooms, and other servants' had to be boarded by churches and cloisters 'in right of princely rank.' 'So there is nothing but wantonness and extravagance; for people of this sort think they must live inordinately well, because they belong to princes. They must needs be eating and drinking all day and all night; they even bring women with them, and are never satisfied.'[1] 'They introduce lasciviousness and immorality into the cloisters,' we read in a complaint of the Bavarian provincial deputies to the Duke about these hunters and falconers and their domestics, 'and they think they have a right to be supplied with food and drink of the best kind day and night.' Orders from the princes forbidding the huntsmen's servants to carry on these evil practices in the cloisters were of little avail.

The *Jus Spolii* also, which had reference to the bequests of the principals of cloisters and the pastors, was claimed by the princes as their perquisite, and often used by the officials in a disgraceful and lamentable manner. 'When a pastor is lying at the point of death, grasping advocates and other employés of secular courts of justice, money-grubbers, and ne'er-do-weels of every description crowd into the house and

[1] *Clag eines einfeltig Klosterbruders* ('Complaint of a Simple Cloister Brother'), p. 4.

make free with whatever they can lay hands on, so that very often, after death, not even the debts of the pastor can be paid.'[1] 'It is no slight grievance,' complained, later on, the clergy of the diocese of Passau, 'that when a country clergyman dies, the very instant the breath is out of his body—indeed, often before he is dead—the parsonage is besieged by secular law officials, and all day long such eating and drinking and feasting goes on as at a fair, and the property of the deceased pastor is so much diminished that often there is not enough left to pay the ordinary his lawful fee, or to reimburse the creditors.' Complaints of this nature were repeatedly made by the Bavarian provincial deputies.[2]

'The long and short of it all is,' we read again in the 'Complaint of a Simple Cloister Brother,' 'that the secular princes and nobles want to be lords of the Church; want to have the best benefices and offices, but at the same time to do little or nothing in return for their emoluments. They want to have the appointing of all the clergy and to pay themselves out of their dues. They want to upset order and discipline in the abbeys and cloisters; to feast and gorge themselves on Church property, and then to cry out, as if they were immaculate, that the clergy are corrupt. O the Pharisees, with whom God is now plaguing the Christian people in the hardest way!'

This Pharisaism of the princes and other secular authorities and states, who were constantly complaining of the abuses among the clergy, was recognised by none better than by one of the noblest of themselves, Duke George of Saxony.

[1] *Clag eines einfeltig Klosterbruders*, p. 4[b].

[2] See Sugenheim, pp. 266–271.

'We find,' said the Duke in instructions for his ambassadors, written in his own hand, 'we find that there is much talk about many abuses; but of the worst of these, by which the whole world is now made to suffer, and which belong to the highest as well as to the lowest classes, not a word is said. It is as clear as daylight that the origin of all this heresy, which God is visiting us with, lies in the way in which the prelates enter into the Church; for God says, "He that entereth not in at the door is not the shepherd." Now it is, alas! not the least scandal of Christendom, that we laymen of high and low degree do not take heed to those words. For when we appoint our own children, brothers, and friends to bishoprics and other Church dignities we are not concerned about the "door," but only how we can manage to push our own people in, whether under the threshold or in through the roof we do not care. These gentlemen, moreover, who get in in this manner behave as if they had bought their benefices for their own heritage, and had full rights in them. Hence it follows that the sheep imitate the shepherds, and incur the wrath of God, as, alas! is seen day by day.'

'Moreover we laymen, who have thus by God's ordinance been placed in power, are so grasping (God grant it may not be so with the clergy also!) that when we have the property of cloisters and other religious foundations under our rule we are inflamed with covetousness after these possessions, so that oftentimes we think more about how to get them into our own hands, to exalt our condition, than we think of providing that an orderly Christian life shall be established and carried on in them. This love of possession has in the present times destroyed many a Christian community

and augmented the incomes of the ruling powers. Therein we have forgotten the love of God and of our neighbour, and have not considered at all whether our neighbour came to damnable evil, so long as we could keep up our own magnificence.'

There were other abuses also which the complainants against the clergy made no mention of. 'Formerly,' says Duke George, 'it was a worthy and profitable usage among us laity that those who had publicly offended against God and honour, were not countenanced or tolerated by any one who had a love of honour, but were shunned and avoided by honourable persons like something by which they might be poisoned: such were usurers, adulterers, deserters, traitors, perjurers, and others who were guilty of notorious sins. Now, however, this sense of honour exists no more, and this is no slight cause why so much happens that gives offence. Why too are not complaints made concerning the runaway monks and nuns who, in forgetfulness of their honour and their vows to God and man, have become faithless and perjured?' 'Every day,' says the Duke, 'scurrilous pamphlets and booklets to further Luther's gospel are printed everywhere, in which those who continue in their obedience to the Christian Church are slandered. There is no cessation of the endeavours which go on day by day to induce religious men and women to leave their cloisters; sermons and threats of everlasting hell torments if they remain in them, with promises of carnal prosperity and happiness if they leave them. As soon as they have escaped from the cloisters they are received and encouraged in the neighbouring principalities, as though they had acted rightly and piously.

Those who help them out think they have done a praiseworthy thing, although such a proceeding is forbidden in law on pain of death. And, what is more, those who cannot be got out by preaching are bought out by money, and where money does not succeed in moving them, they are accused of so much wrong-doing that they are obliged to come away. And these lords and princes who have thus managed to turn them out by fraud and by force take possession of their property as if it were a lawful inheritance. From which it is clearly seen that they care more about possessing the cloisters than for having pious and honourable servants of God in them. We have unanswerable evidence to prove all this. With regard also to all that takes place before God and the highest, holiest sacrament, and also before the saints, such things would be monstrous even for Turks and heathens.'

'We do not wish to be understood to have said,' Duke George goes on, 'that the abuses which are in opposition to God ought not to be removed, as, for instance, when through the wicked greed of prelates somebody or other is unjustly oppressed in an unchristian manner; or when somebody has held an erroneous belief concerning the holy offices of the mass, or the other holy sacraments; or if any one has not taken a properly solemn view of entering the clerical state, or any suchlike cases in which it is possible to err. Abuses of this sort should be dealt with by the regular preachers, who are ordained and commissioned by superior prelates; these men should punish, rebuke, reform, and act in such a manner that the people may not be led away from the unity of the Church; or if, from want of understanding, any have been led into error, they should be brought back

again by good means and instruction. Such a course would be laudable and honourable, and would result in good. Above all it is to be desired that the people should be made to understand that because one bad covetous priest has transgressed, that is no reason why all priests and rulers appointed by God should be driven away, and their places filled up by scoundrels; that if one man abuses the service of the holy mass, that is no reason why all masses should be abolished; that if any have understood from the Canon that God is crucified afresh at every mass, they should be instructed in the right way of understanding this mystery, the way that the Christian Church understands it. We must not sacrifice the whole body for the sake of one festered finger, but we must see that the diseased finger does not cause the death of the body; in like manner, if in one monastery there should be one or two wicked monks, all monastic Orders must not be exterminated on that account.'

It was not reform, however, that was being aimed at, but the complete overthrow of all existing institutions. The reign of anarchy had already begun, and princes, nobles, and town councils could now without let or hindrance insult and revile God's holy Sacrament and trample it under foot, could destroy God's houses, could appropriate and devour the Church funds and alms, and could carry off nuns from convents and outrage and dishonour them. All discipline was at an end, and it was to be feared that the fate of the Greek empire was hanging over Germany. Luther and his gospel had already had so much effect that there was scarcely a single household in which unity of spirit prevailed. This so-called reformer had repu-

diated all written laws, and taught that our consciences must be our guides, and not written codes of justice. 'From which it can easily be deduced that there will soon be no justice at all; for when one individual is contradicted, he will make a judge of his own conscience and say that the others have spoken unjustly. And so nobody will arrive at justice, and there will be no justice.' Through the breaking up of the Church and its unity and organisation it had already come to this, 'that almost every individual made fresh regulations, and each one thought his own opinions the best, and more sects and heresies have sprung up than there are articles in the Christian Faith.'[1]

[1] See 'Briefe Georg's,' published by Seidemann in the *Zeitschrift für histor. Theologie*, Jahrg. 1849, p. 175.

CHAPTER IX

GROWING DISTURBANCES IN RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL LIFE

WITHIN the space of a few years the new doctrines had become widely spread in towns and provinces, and the overthrow of all the diabolical iniquity of the Pontificate was regarded by disciples of the new faith as an imperative duty to God.

In the Saxon electorate 'the rule of the Devil,' as the new religionists expressed it, 'became feebler from day to day;' in Pomerania the Duke 'had come forward as a divinely inspired instrument for spreading the pure Word of God,' 'was suppressing the Satanic jugglery of the Mass' and turning the Church goods into 'Christian use.' A revolution of the most radical nature, and fraught with far-reaching results, was being inaugurated in the territory of the Teutonic Knights in Prussia, for the transformation of which into a secular principality Luther worked with unbounded zeal. The latter had already sent one of his disciples into Prussia in the year 1523, 'in order that this land also should bid farewell to the empire of Satan.' In Hesse the Landgrave Philip became an enthusiastic follower of the new religion; in the Palatinate the Elector Ludwig, and in Zweibrücken Duke Ludwig, had caused 'the pure Word of God out of the Scriptures' to be proclaimed.[1]

[1] Fuller details about the new doctrines are given in the third volume of this work.

The new doctrines had gained a particularly large following in the free cities. The civil magistrates, who for a long time past had been constantly embroiled in disputes with the bishops and the ecclesiastical bodies, either on account of the privileges and franchises of the latter or on some point or other of use or abuse of spiritual jurisdiction and secular power, now rejoiced to think that at last 'it would become known what the ecclesiastical estate really was;' that it would become subordinate in all things to secular authority, and that the property which it held and administered unlawfully would be put into better hands. The towns were invaded by preachers, mostly escaped monks, who not only were not hindered from coming, but were often even invited, and who held forth with utter shamelessness against the Church service, the idolatrous priests, and the stolen goods of the clergy, against fasts, confession, and all penitential exercises. They praised evangelical liberty in such a manner that the rude populace often thought itself entitled to the worst acts of violence, as at Erfurt and Wittenberg. These preachers, far from being of one accord with each other, were often fiercely at variance, which was highly prejudicial to their 'pure gospel.'

In order to reform and rectify all these dangerous matters, the delegates of the towns assembled in July 1524 at a Diet at Spires. As the imperial edict countermanding the religious convention at Spires on November 11 had not yet reached them, one would have thought that the towns would at least not have anticipated this meeting. They were determined, however, to decide these questions of faith beforehand on their own authority, and they

passed a resolution at Spires which had a very important bearing on future religious organisation in Germany.

'Seeing that the Holy Evangel and the Word of God,' so it was stated in the *Reichsabschied* of the Diet of July 18, 'had shone forth also in the free and imperial cities, to the salvation of souls and the furtherance of brotherly love, but that it was being proclaimed with various meanings by ignorant preachers of the populace, it was highly necessary that each separate town should take up the matter for itself. Each one should, as far as possible, see to it and arrange with their clergy and preachers that for the future nothing but the pure and plain Gospel, approved by the Apostles and Scriptures, should be preached, and that all other teaching which was contrary to the Gospel and to Holy Writ, and which conduced also to scandal and uproar, should be suppressed and avoided.' It was to be left to the judgment of the town magistrates to decide in what the 'pure and plain Gospel' consisted, and what was in opposition to it.

It went on to say further, in the *Reichsabschied* of the Diet at Spires, that if any town was punished with the ban, or any other weapon of law, for evasion of the Edict of Worms, a new Diet would instantly be held to consider how to advise and help the said town. At the forthcoming convention they (the towns) would bring forward a joint scheme of advice concerning matters of religion; if the proposals of the other notables were found not to coincide with theirs, they would first of all lay their scheme before the assembly, and if it was not agreed to by the other estates the town delegates would then consider the matter further, as opportunity

arose, and have recourse to protestation and other necessary means.

A 'unanimous Christian agreement,' such as the towns pretended to expect from the religious convention, could not possibly be hoped for as the result of such a measure.

The towns were already counting on foreign help. 'I have been told,' wrote Archduke Ferdinand to the Emperor, 'that the towns have had delegates from the Swiss and the Bohemians at Spires, as they (the towns) had sent to them previously in order to come to an understanding in case they should be punished or called to account for the Lutheran doctrine, which they call at present the evangelical truth.'

In order to find out in what the pure and straightforward Gospel consisted, disputations were held in different towns in the presence of some of the town councillors; on these occasions the disputants were frequently allowed, as at Constance, to cite Greek and Hebrew passages, and the town council, none of whose members understood either Greek or Hebrew, gave the final decision as to what was the true Gospel. What strange results occurred sometimes through this method of dealing with religious questions, is shown, for instance, by a letter addressed by the town council of Constance to the *Reichsregiment* complaining of Brother Antonius, the lector of the Dominicans, who, said the town council, 'preaches in opposition to the divine Scriptures and to our commands.' They, the members of the council, had ordered the preachers of the town to note down, each one of them, all the points in which the others had preached in opposition to the orders of the council. Two preachers had now sent up a document of this sort

filed against Brother Antonius, in which the following points, among others, in which the Dominican had defied the council's orders, were set down: 'He treated certain books as sacred and Biblical which had never been regarded or accepted as such—for instance, the third and fourth books of Esdras, the books of Ecclesiastes, Wisdom, the book of Maccabees, and others, concerning which he had the audacity to say that they were not fables but Holy Scripture.' Furthermore, he was wont to say almost daily that we had no right to judge, criticise, slander, and besmirch the Pope and the bishops. They (the council), on the other hand, wanted to prove by the 'pure Word of God that all faithful preachers and shepherds of souls were bound to give the highest diligence not only to leading their flocks to pasture, but also to warning them against wolves.' It was, therefore, their duty to cry out against, and denounce as thieves, murderers, and antichrists the Pope and his emissaries and institutions, by which the flock were led astray, and to hold them up to the contempt and hatred of the sheep. One of these three new apostles of the Gospel of love preached in June 1524 that 'the princes are nowadays greater tyrants than the emperors Nero, Decius, and Diocletian had been, and that the knights and the nobles ought to fight for the faith like bloodhounds and tigers.'

In order to establish the 'pure and clear Gospel' it was above all things necessary to effect a change in the existing constitution of the Church, and to transfer ecclesiastical jurisdiction from spiritual to secular authorities. Roman jurists had already advocated a measure of this sort in the fifteenth century. The town magistrates, and the princes also, aimed at

strengthening their own territorial might by the establishment of a secular Church government, independent of ecclesiastical power, which should control Church property, appoint and depose 'preachers of the Gospel'—in short, treat the clergy generally as much as possible as subservient officials of the commonwealth. 'The imperial cities do not care in the least about religion,' said Melanchthon; 'they are only anxious to get dominion into their own hands and to be free from the control of the bishops.'[1]

None of the towns opposed so strong a resistance to the papacy and the clergy as did Nuremberg—'one of the finest pearls in the crown of the Gospel,' as the new religionists called this city. The three men who were pre-eminently active there in attempts to overthrow the Church, were the two treasurers of the town, Hieronymus Ebner and Caspar Nützel, who had the virtual control of the community in their own hands, and Lazarus Spengler, who, 'nominally only a scribe or a clerk,' says Camerarius in his 'Life of Melanchthon,' 'was in reality the author and director of all the decisions of the council.' In close connection with this Spengler was the preacher and popular agitator Andreas Osiander, who set the burgesses in alarm by means of the town mob. 'A conceited scrivener without any sense of propriety and a presumptuous priest without the slightest experience,' says Wilibald Pirkheimer of Spengler and Osiander, 'are forsooth to rule despotically over such a worthy town as Nuremberg, and to alter and reform everything accord-

[1] 'Maxime oderunt illam dominationem [of the bishops] civitates imperii. De doctrina religionis nihil laborant; tantum de regno et libertate sunt solliciti' (letter to Luther in the *Corp. Reform.* ii. 328).

ing to their own wisdom; whatever they want must be right, and must be done.' 'If only you knew,' says the same writer to a friend, 'what sort of business this Spengler carries on, you would scarcely be able to wonder enough how words and deeds can be so contradictory in one man.'[1] Altogether the whole Lutheran band, grown in a short time to such power, was so little distinguished by decency and morality that Hans Sachs, although himself a disciple of Luther's, gave vent to bitter complaints in the year 1524. 'There is nothing but shrieking and clamouring among you, and little will or purpose,' he exclaims to the Lutherans. 'If you were evangelical, as you boast, you would do the works of the Evangel. It is indeed true that if you Lutherans led chaste and blameless lives your teaching would be much more highly respected by all men; those who now call you heretics would speak well of you; those who now despise you would learn of you. But with your gluttony, your riots, your squabbles, your scorn, calumny, and contempt of the priests, and all your licentious conduct, you Lutherans have brought great opprobrium on the evangelical teaching. This is, alas! as clear as daylight.' Christopher Fürer, who had at first attached himself to the new religionists, withdrew from them. He writes as follows: 'As we have been cheated by our former clergy with regard to money, so the present preachers deceive us in all matters of virtue, charity, conscience, and good morals, so that they lead us away from a human existence into a bestial and devilish one, all which arises from the reason that they no longer think that heaven can be won by good works, but only by a hollow fictitious faith;

[1] See Binder, pp. 107–109 and p. 222, note 32.

and thus all the laws and the deeds to which Christ pointed us have been set at nought, and the people are pursuing salvation by following their pleasure and inclination.'[1]

From all the pulpits which were given up to these preachers 'there went forth the sound of abuse and calumny, and all manner of licentious and seditious utterances.' Pirkheimer wrote the following lament to Melanchthon concerning the behaviour of the preachers and their followers in that town 'which but a short time before was so full of noble Christian life and spiritual work:' 'Our city is swarming not only with men who, while presuming to instruct others, do not strive in the least to improve themselves, but with inquisitive, chattering, idle women, who prefer ruling anything and everything to their own households. If you were here, and were a witness of so much lamentable perfidiousness, defamation, falsehood, and intriguing, you would scarcely be able to refrain from tears.'[2] But those preachers who raved against everything that was considered sacred, and reviled and slandered all those who would not renounce the faith of the Church, calling out that they must be converted or driven out of the town, were by no means unanimous in their religious teaching. 'I know nothing of their preaching,' said Charity Pirkheimer in a letter, 'but I often hear that there are many people in this town who are almost in despair and do not go to hear any sermons. They say that they are bewildered by the preachers, that they do not know what they ought to believe, and that they would give a great deal not to have heard these men.'[3]

[1] See Döllinger's *Reformation*, i. 172–173. [2] *Pirkheimeri Op.* p. 374.
[3] Von Höfler, *Denkwürdigkeiten der Charitas Pirkheimer*, p. 130.

But the ruling party in the town council uttered very different opinions concerning the preachers. Nothing of a seditious nature, they assured the Emperor, would be tolerated in Nuremberg. At a diet of town representatives at Ulm, on December 12, 1524, some of the delegates, by instigation from Nuremberg, drew up an address to the Emperor, stating that the town preachers were solemnly enjoined and bound over to abide by the instructions of the imperial mandate, and not to preach anything else than the pure plain Word of God according to the Scriptures approved by the holy Christian Church.

Attacks on the Church ritual and the rights of Church institutions had begun some time before in Nuremberg, as in other towns; a few months later, by order of the town council, a conference on religion, of several days' duration, was held in the council-house, and it began, as usual, with 'the abolition of the existing Church.' After prolonged discussions measures of force were resorted to, and by despotic secular authority the new gospel was imposed upon the town of Nuremberg and on fifty or sixty communities under its jurisdiction.[1]

After this there was no longer any question of toleration towards the Catholic Church, or of respect for the religious convictions of its members.

This is shown in the most convincing manner by the fate of the Convent of St. Clara, which its abbess, Charitas Pirkheimer, has depicted so vividly in her letters and memoirs.[2]

[1] See Roth, *Reformation in Nuremberg.*

[2] Von Höfler has rendered a great service by publishing these. They are, in their way, a unique and lofty testimony, for the whole century,

Prior to the proclamation of the new gospel, Charitas had been esteemed by all the most distinguished men as one of the noblest of her sex, and in Nuremberg —so said Christopher Scheurl—'all who were distinguished by intellect or position wondered at the cleverness, the learning, and the lofty moral purity of the abbess.' With regard to her connection with the Convent of St. Clara, according to the actual statement of the Nuremberg town council, 'nothing blamable or of ill report was known about her, only chastity, honour, and good repute.' But if the most outrageous acts of violence could be perpetrated against her and her associates—many of whom had sprung from the first families of the town—it is easily conceivable what sort of means would be used elsewhere by these religious despots and tyrants for the persecution and suppression of the Catholics.

The fate of the Convent of St. Clara is to a certain extent the measure of what the Archduke Ferdinand described as 'an age grown destitute of human and divine peace.'

'Many people both among the mighty and the mean,' says Charitas in her memoirs of the year 1524, 'came next day to see their friends in the cloisters, and preached and talked about the new doctrines, and disputed unceasingly, saying that convent life was damnable and misleading, and that it was impossible that we could be saved by it, for we were all of us children of the Devil. Therefore many of them wanted to carry away their children, sisters, aunts, and nieces by force, and used much threatening or cajoling.'

of sublime faith, pure piety, and Christian courage in the midst of untold oppression and persecution, and amid a general decay of faith which has no parallel. Binder has made admirable use of them in his biographical sketch of Charitas.

'As, however, not a single Sister wished to leave the convent, the new religionists laid the blame of this stiff-neckedness on the spiritual pastors of the nunnery, the Barefoot Friars, and declared that, until the latter were removed, it would be impossible to convert the nuns to the new faith. It was accordingly decreed at the town council, by the enemies of cloisters, that the Convent of St. Clara should in future be deprived of the spiritual guidance of the Barefoot Friars, and placed under the direction of the new preachers.'

'I then made known this decision to the inmates of the convent,' Charitas goes on, 'and took counsel with them. Then the Sisters began to consider what would happen to them if the convent were taken away from the orderly government of the Fathers, and handed over to the power of the lawless priests and runaway monks. Not one of the Sisters would agree to this measure, and with one voice they gave the advice: we must not wait till the Fathers were taken from us by force; for it would not be easy then to get them back again, however much we complained; we must supplicate beforehand and point out fully to an honourable council, what grievance and disaster, both spiritual and temporal, would arise from this innovation, hoping they would lay to heart this our great danger and distress. Wherefore I followed their advice and wrote the supplication, which I read out in the convent, and all the Sisters, without exception, agreed to it.'

In this exquisite 'Supplication' the nuns of St. Clara represented emphatically to the council how they had always maintained themselves free from reproach towards the authorities 'in all seemly and moderate things,' and how no blame could be cast on their whole

manner of life; they prayed therefore that they might not be forcibly interfered with in the freedom of their religious convictions and the practice of their conventual ordinances. 'And as some of them are confirmed in the suspicion that the Fathers forbid our reading the Holy Gospel and other books, we declare this to be truly unjust. We can say with perfect truth that we have both the Old and New Testaments, in German and Latin, in daily use, and that we apply all diligence to understand them aright. And we do not read the Bible only, but also the news of what happens daily and is brought to us, except the libellous books which distress our consciences and in our opinion are not always in accordance with Christian simplicity. We hope indeed that God will not deny to us His holy and true Spirit, for which we heartily pray, that we may understand His Word not only according to the letter, but also according to the spirit.'

Other charges also against their convent life, they said, were entirely unfounded. 'Albeit it is reproached against us by some that we trust wholly in our own works, and hope by these alone to obtain salvation, it has not been hidden from us by the grace of God, let people say what they will, that by works alone (as says St. Paul) no man can be justified, but by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Besides which the Lord Jesus Christ himself teaches us that when we have done all we must still say that we are unprofitable servants. But we know also, on the other hand, that there can be no real true faith without good works, any more than there can be a good tree without good fruit; that God will reward each one according to his deserts, and that when we appear before the judgment-seat of Christ we

shall receive each of us according to our works, good or evil.'

'We know also that we must not ascribe our good works to our own merit, but if any good thing is done by us it is God's work and not ours. Therefore it is without foundation that we are accused of boasting of our works, for our boasting is only in the reviled and crucified Christ, who bids us to take up his cross and follow him. Therefore we consider ourselves bound, and we are enjoined thereto, to trample down the old Adam, to subdue the body to the spirit by self-mortification, which we can do better in the convent than outside.'

They had all unanimously resolved not to go out of the convent, but to remain in the vocation to which God had called them. It was not for the sake of good living that they stayed in the cloister; for the members of the council knew, from their yearly accounts, that need and poverty reigned among them, and that they had barely enough to live on. Also they were no contemners of the married state, but as to themselves they wished to live and die as virgins, and this truly 'could not be made a reproach to them by any reasonable person.' They did not wish to retain any one in the cloister by force, or to condemn any one who wished to leave it, 'but as we ourselves never like to coerce others, so we should like to be ourselves uncoerced, and to be allowed freedom for our spirits, not for our bodies.' Hence they did not wish to be burdened with strange spiritual pastors, since that was the very way to the destruction of their cloister. They prayed that the council in these perilous times would not 'give occasion for offence and maltreatment,' but would have

pity on them, seeing that the question was one which did not concern their temporal well-being only, but the salvation of their souls.

At the request of her sister nuns Charitas wrote a detailed letter to her brother-in-law, the councillor Martin Geuder, begging him to use his influence in the council in their favour. For the space of four centuries, she said, the Barefoot Friars had had the care of souls in the Convent of St. Clara, and there had never been a complaint against them; the two Fathers who for the last forty years had held the posts of preacher and confessor had, as the council knew, received nothing from the convent but meat, drink, and clothing. Who then had the right to turn out the Fathers and to force others into their place? 'No servants or beggars even,' she urged, 'were compelled to confess to priests chosen by their employers. We should be poorer than the poorest if we were obliged to confess to those who themselves have no faith in confession; to receive the Holy Eucharist from people who commit such terrible abuses with regard to it that it was shame and disgrace to hear; and to be obedient to men who themselves obeyed neither pope, bishop, emperor, nor the holy Christian Church; men who abolished the beautiful services of God and instituted others out of their own heads, just as they liked. I would rather be dead than alive in such a case.'

In this letter also Charitas reiterates the assertion that the whole convent read the Bible every day. 'By the grace of God we have no lack of holy Evangels. I, however, set more store by following their precepts in life and carrying them out in works, than by having them always on our lips and not doing their works.'

'But these preachers say that the Bible is not preached or explained to us in any other way than with human palaver. I answer: By the text of the holy Evangel we will abide, and neither dead nor alive will we be driven from it. But if we are to have glossaries I will much rather believe the glossary of the dear holy teaching, approved by the holy Christian Church, than the glossary of a foreign mind, rejected and forbidden by the Church, which is preached by those who also are nothing more than men, and whose evangelical fruits are very different from the fruits and the virtues of the dear saints whom they reject.' [1]

'Do not suffer yourself to repent,' wrote the Sister Felicitas Grundherr to her father, one of the town councillors, 'that you helped me to follow the bent of my own will and give myself up to God; I hope that special joy and honour will be yours in heaven on this account—yea, more than if you had given me in marriage to the Roman Emperor, in whose palace I would not live even for this.' 'With the help of God no one shall drag me out of my beloved cloister while I live. I will go further and will say this much: if they abuse the monastic state as something so terrible, I at least am of this mind: had I still my free-will I would again offer myself to God of that free-will; let them preach and say what they will, in the state of a nun I desire and intend to live and to die, and in this state, so God gives me grace, to await my Judge.' 'I also am confident that you will not allow yourself to be led away from your gallant Christian temper. For I verily think no greater heart sorrow could overtake me on

[1] See von Höfler, *Denkwürdigkeiten* (memoirs) *der Charitas Pirkheimer*, pp. 5–19.

earth than to know that you had fallen from the faith. It would almost break my heart.' 'Methinks,' she writes another time, 'that if I could only be sure that we and our worthy fathers would be left to serve God in peace according to the ancient venerable traditions and usages, I could have no greater earthly joy.'[1]

But no voice pleading for Christian freedom and justice found a hearing. A deputation from the town council forced open the entrance to the convent and tried to persuade the nuns that it was their duty, after the town had been enlightened by the preaching of the evangel, to receive among themselves a 'precious preacher' of the 'pure Word of God;' the new gospel ordinances must be introduced everywhere. When the whole of the sisterhood took their stand on their religious convictions and their duty to their consciences, and remained firm against all threats and cajolery, they were deprived, by command of the council, of all spiritual ministration. A seventy years old nun was obliged to dispense at death with the consolation of the Holy Eucharist because, in spite of her heartrending entreaties, no Catholic priest was allowed to come near her.

'It was indeed a pitiful and lamentable thing,' said the Sisters in a fresh petition to the town council, 'that at a time when evangelical liberty was being preached, their consciences should be taken captive.' How could they be blamed if, in this tumultuous and schismatic time, in which all sorts of changes and innovations were made and unmade every day, they preferred to remain true to their own faith and to the good and venerable customs of the holy Christian Church, until the latter

[1] Lochner, 'Letters of Felicitas Grundherr,' in the *Histor.-polit. Blätter*, xliv. 442–455. See Binder, pp. 118–120.

had spoken out and settled positively what was doubtful in its teaching? But the secular manager of the convent, the treasurer Nützel, could see nothing but obstinacy, pride, and idolatry in the firmness of the nuns. He communicated the council's order that two of the new preachers should preach in the convent to the abbess, with the remark, 'Our Lord God fashions strange rods to punish us with, because we will not otherwise forsake our idolatry.' He even cast it in the teeth of the nuns that they wanted to bring about bloodshed, slaughter, and all sorts of calamities by their resistance.[1]

'Is it not a pitiful thing,' said Clara Pirkheimer, the sister of the abbess, to her brother Wilibald, 'that they want to compel us to another faith which we have not in our hearts—that we should be obliged to believe as they wish? For nothing is Christian, in their opinion, but what they themselves settle. They are the Church itself; but I fear greatly that the Holy Ghost does not always rule in this Church, to judge from its fruits.'[2] 'One sees well,' wrote Charitas, 'what profit or propriety has followed from men and women escaping from cloisters. What fruits it has produced we shall learn in time, with great wailing and weeping, of those persons who have found out to their despair that they have been cheated out of the cloisters not for their souls' sakes, but for the sake of their property. Now they are not secure in their lives; there is nothing more despised than runaway monks and nuns.' 'Now we know well that there are some among the preachers who do not think us Christians, but who under the cloak of the holy unvarnished Gospel cry out against

[1] See von Höfler, pp. 33-69. [2] See Binder, p. 145.

us in an unbrotherly manner from public pulpits; some of them say also that they shall have no peace till they have preached all the nuns and monks out of the town and turned our convent into a skittle-ground; we have heard this very often.'

What new faith are they to follow, she asks, since the preachers contradict one another, and each one declares that he alone is right? 'I am informed that those of Strasburg, Bucer, Capito, and others, now say Christ was not God, but only a pious man, and called therefore the Son of God; some also have themselves been baptised afresh, and there are so many different opinions that if we followed them all we should not know what would be the end of it. "Follow those that speak the truth," they say, but each one thinks he is right and that he alone speaks the truth.' 'I am also told that Carlstadt has not yet retracted anything; Luther says he has not understood him rightly, and they have reviled each other to the utmost. Each one wants to compel the other to do and to believe what he himself wishes, and when they do not succeed they rage, scold, calumniate, and commit acts of violence. Is this the true evangelical way? I appeal to God.' 'Each one uses the Holy Scriptures as he likes, and will not give in to any one else, and there is no end to it all.' Nützel had once praised Zwingli highly to her, but if she followed him 'where would she have been led away to with regard to the Sacrament?' And nevertheless each and all preached 'the Word of God and the pure evangel.'[1]

In order that the nuns might hear the 'pure Word of God' the town council sent three preachers to them,

[1] See von Höfler, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, pp. 148, 161–163.

one of whom was Osiander, and constrained them to attend their sermons.[1] 'Then,' writes Charitas, 'there was great uproar and agitation in our church.' 'They threatened us that if they found that we did not come to hear the sermons, they would set people over us who would remain with us during the preaching and would observe if we were all there, and how we behaved, and if we did not stop up our ears with wool. Some of them also advised that the door of the chapel should be taken off and a railing put in its place, so that we should sit publicly in the chapel in sight of every one.' Concerning the substance of the sermons she writes: 'I must not and cannot describe in full in what an unchristian manner they forced the Holy Scriptures into a different meaning; how violently they upset the doctrines of the Church; how disgracefully they repudiated the Holy Mass and all ceremonies; how grossly they reviled and libelled all religious orders, priests, and clergy; how they spared neither Pope nor Emperor, whom they called public tyrants, devils, antichrists; in what a rude unchristian manner, contrary to all brotherly love, they attacked us nuns, accusing us of the worst sins they could think of, preaching about us in such a way that they might provoke people against us, admonishing them to extirpate us godless folk altogether, to tear down our cloisters and tear us out of them by force; for we were in a damnable condition, heretics, idolaters, blasphemers, and must belong to the Devil for all eternity.'

[1] At Strasburg, in like manner, a committee of the burgesses insisted that the 'godless tyranny of the nuns' should be put down, and that they should be constrained to hear the Word of God. Baum, *Capito und Nutzer*, pp. 310–311. See Paulus, *Die Strassburger Reformatoren und die Gewissensfreiheit*, &c., p. 57.

'The preachers,' wrote Wilibald Pirkheimer to Melanchthon, 'scream, curse, rage, leave no stone unturned in order to excite the hatred of the masses against the poor nuns; they say indeed, if words do not avail, they must use force. It is, in fact, a wonder that the convent has not been long ago plundered and destroyed, so sedulously has this fiendish hatred been deliberately nourished.'[1]

'We had just come out of the persecutions that befell us for our Lenten penances,' Charitas goes on in her memoirs. 'After Easter it became much worse; for on Friday in Easter week all the priests were called to the council house and forbidden to read the Latin Mass, because the learned men had found out that the Mass was such an idolatrous, blasphemous thing that it could not be endured any longer, especially on account of the Canon.'

'It was also forbidden to all secular priests, excepting those in parsonages, and to all priests in cloisters, to hear confession and to administer other sacraments. And from that day also we have had no mass in our church.

'Every day they threaten to drive us out, or to pull down or burn our convent. One day some wicked insolent fellows walked round the convent and threatened our servants; last night again they tried to march through the building, so that we were in the greatest anxiety and danger, and could scarcely sleep for fear. They look upon us as more despicable than the poor women in the streets, for they preach openly that we are worse than these. We had so much of these Easter joys between Easter and Pentecost that it would be no

[1] *Pirkheimeri Op.* p. 374.

wonder if the very marrow in our bones had dried up.' 'We scarcely dared hold the divine service, or ring the bell in the choir. For the instant they heard a sound from us they set up curses and brawling, cried out against us in the churches, threw stones at our choir, broke in the windows of our church, and sang ribald songs in the churchyard.'

The town council did nothing for the protection of these poor victims, but, on the contrary, told them it was their own obstinacy which would be to blame if a tumult arose. They informed the nuns that 'by means of the clear evangelical Word of God it had been made manifest that the monastic or conventual state was a reprobate, sinful, and accursed state, in which people lived in opposition to the commandments of God and the Holy Gospel. This and suchlike the common people now fully believed, and they were therefore so incensed against the religious orders that they would not tolerate any more cloisters or clerical state, either here or in any other countries.'[1]

Osiander stirred up a number of women who persecuted the nuns with ugly talk and threats. 'The women came here yesterday,' wrote Clara Pirkheimer to Wilibald, 'and were as vicious and spiteful as can be imagined; if there were no other torment in hell than such women, one should keep from sinning, so as not to come near to them. If there were no women and priests, our case would not be so bad. They preach such things to us that it would be far more profitable to a young woman's heart to go out of the world than to be obliged to listen to them.'[2]

Respectable men like Martin Geuder, Jacob Muffel,

[1] Von Höfler, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, pp. 83-93. [2] Binder, p. 150.

Leonhard Grundherr, Hieronymus Holzschuher, Christoph Fürer, who were indignant at the licentious proceedings of the preachers, and the violent measures of their colleagues on the council, had no longer any influence. 'Everything is done by force now,' several of them said to the abbess; 'there is no regard for justice and decency, no fear of the Pope or the Emperor, or even of God Himself, except in talk. It's always now, "We want this, and so this must be done, this and nothing else."'

By a decree of the council leave was granted to every man 'to go and see his female friends in convents as often as he liked.[1] This visiting had already been begun in the Convent of St. Catherine, and there was a great coming and going, early and late, and it had even happened that a Lutheran preacher had exchanged clothes with other good comrades at the hospital, and had come to the convent and joked in an unpriestly manner with the young Sisters, and told them they must promise to marry him. Then when he left the convent, he said a great many immodest and untrue things about the poor Sisters, which they had never thought.'

Soon afterwards another decree of the council settled that it was to be left to the judgment of parents to remove from the convents their daughters who had taken vows, whether the latter liked it or not. If necessary parents were to resort to force to 'save the evangelical freedom' of their daughters. 'By all ways and means,' said Luther's friend Wenzel Linck,[1] formerly vicar-general of the Augustines, and since 1524 preacher at the new hospital at Nuremberg, 'by all ways and means the nuns must be brought into the right road of

[1] See W. Reindell, *Doctor Wenzeslaus Linck von Colditz*, 1483–1547.

salvation, even against their own will, just as one does not stop to ask people who are in danger of being drowned or burnt to death whether they want to be saved.' It was of no use, they said, for the nuns to plead their vows, for these were only human inventions.

On the eve of the Corpus Christi Festival, 1525, the wives of the councillors Tetzel, Nützel, and Ebner informed the abbess that they intended to fetch away their daughters; they would also bring other people with them, they said, so that the abbess might see that they were strong enough.

'When I called the poor children and told them their mothers were coming to fetch them away,' Charitas writes, 'they all three fell on the ground screaming, weeping, and howling, and were in such a miserable plight that God in heaven must have been moved to pity.'

The Sister Margaret Tetzel had been nine years in the Order; Catherine Ebner and Clara Nützel had taken the veil six years ago.

'Meanwhile their screams had reached the ears of the populace, who gathered round in great crowds, so that the street and the churchyard were quite full, and the councillors' wives could scarcely drive up in their carriages. Then they were ashamed that such a mob was there, and wanted me to send their daughters out by the garden door, and sent the two gentlemen Sebald Pfinzing and Andreas Imhof to me with this request. But I would not do it. I would not have the matter hushed up in secrecy, and I said that if they were doing right they need not be ashamed, and I would not let them go out by any other way than that by which I had received them in; that was through the chapel door.

Then they insisted that I should command the children imperatively to go out by themselves. But that also I would not do, as I plainly told them. Not one of them, however, would cross the threshold. The gentlemen urged that the business must be brought to an end, for the crowd kept on increasing and they were afraid of a riot. I said to the gentlemen: "Then go you and talk to them, and see if you can persuade them; I cannot and will not force them to that which is repugnant to their hearts and souls." So then the two gentlemen went in. I said: "I hand over my poor young orphans to you and commend them to the Good Shepherd who has redeemed them with his precious blood." Then the wicked women rushed in like devouring wolves, Dame Fritz Tetzlin with a daughter, Dame Hieronymus Ebner, Dame Sigmund Fürer, Dame Caspar Rützlin with her brother Lenhard Held, who was in the place of the warden, and also Sebald Pfinzing's little son. Then the women tried to persuade the young nuns by kind words; but if they would not listen to these they said they should use force. Then these strong young soldiers of Christ defended themselves as well as they could with word and act, with great weeping, wailing, praying, and entreating. But there was less pity than in hell. The mothers said they had come to save their souls from hell, that they were in the jaws of the Devil. The nuns answered that they would not leave their holy convent; they would answer for their sins at the day of judgment to the great Judge. Catherine Emser said: "You are the mother of my flesh, but not of my spirit, for you did not give me my soul; therefore I am not bound to be obedient to you in things which go against my soul." At this and other things they made a great mocking.

"Speaks Catherine thus so stoutly and steadfastly, and does she support all her words with the Holy Scriptures? Then tell her how greatly they have acted against the Holy Gospel." Afterwards the gentlemen said outside they had never in all their lives heard the like of it; she had spoken for nearly an hour without interruption, but had uttered no vain word; on the contrary all were so well considered that each word must have weighed a pound. In vain did the mothers threaten their daughters that if they would not go out quietly they would send people who would be strong enough to manage them; 'they would bind them hand and foot and carry them out.' The gentlemen of the council said that 'if they had foreseen this struggle they would not have come for thirty *Gulden*; nobody should ever again drag them into such a scene.' At the request of the women that the abbess should release them from their vows of obedience the latter said: 'Dear children, you know that what you have vowed to God I cannot release you from, and I do not intend to meddle with it at all. But in all that you have hitherto owed to me I will set you free, as much as I can and may.' 'Then these worldly people were satisfied and said I had done my duty; they did not require any more. What had been promised to God went for nothing, as the taking of vows was now abolished; they had not the power to vow anything, except at baptism. Then the three children all exclaimed with one voice: "We do not wish to be let off, but what we have vowed before God we will keep, with His help." Margaret Tezlin implored: "O, dear mother, do not drive us away from you." I said: "Dear children, you see that I, alas! cannot help you, for they are too strong; if worse misfortune were

to happen to the convent, you would not like to see it. I hope we shall not be parted, but shall meet again and be for ever together with our faithful Shepherd." Then Catherine Ebner said: "Here I stay, and will not budge; no human being shall compel me to go out of the convent. But even if they drag me out by force I shall never give up my will to them for ever."

'As soon as she had said these words one of the men took her by the arm and began pulling and dragging her. Then I ran away with the Sisters, for I could not bear to see the misery. Some of the Sisters remained in front of the chapel door. They heard the great wrangling, scuffling, and tugging, with the loud weeping and wailing of the children. There were, indeed, four people to one nun, two dragging in front and two pushing behind, so that Catherine Ebner and Margaret Tezlin had fallen one over the other on the threshold. They nearly trampled off one of poor Margaret's feet. Dame Ebner threatened her daughter that if she would not go on she would push her down the steps.'

. . . . . .

'Then there arose an incredible screaming, lamenting, and weeping, before they tore off their nuns' garments and dressed them in worldly clothes; but they took the Sisters home with them.'

'When they wanted to put them into the carriages outside the church there was again great lamentation. The poor children cried out with loud voices to the crowd and complained to them that they were suffering violence and injustice, that they had been carried off from the convent by force. Sister Clara (Clara Nüztlein) spoke out aloud: "Thou holy mother of God, thou

knowest that it is not my own will." As they were being driven away, hundreds of loutish fellows and other people ran after the carriages, and our children went on screaming and crying, and Dame Ebner struck her daughter Catherine on the mouth, so that it began to bleed, and went on bleeding all the way. Now when each carriage had arrived at the paternal house, loud screaming and weeping began again, so that the people were moved to great pity for them. Some *Landsknechts* also, who had run after them, said that "were it not that they feared a riot and the town sergeants, who were also there, they would have struck in with their swords and helped the poor children." '[1]

Müllner, the government historian of Nuremberg, wrote as follows of the proceedings at the Convent of St. Clara: 'There were also some nuns in the town who were tired of convent life; for the daughters of Hieronymus Ebner, Caspar Nützel, and Friedrich Tetzel laid aside their nun's dress and went out of the convent home to their parents.'[2]

'Which new faith is one to follow?' asked Charitas Pirkheimer, and so too said all true Catholics who loved their Church, when they were enjoined to conform to the Gospel. 'The new teachers,' they represented to the apostates from the Church, 'contradict one another in the most important articles of the faith, and each one appeals for the truth of his own belief to the Holy Scriptures, which each interprets according to his taste. How, moreover, could it be otherwise if Luther's state-

[1] Von Höfler, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, pp. 97–107.

[2] Concerning Müllner's untrustworthiness in his annals of the period of the separation from the Church see Dr. L(ochner's) essay in the *Histor.-polit. Blätter*, lxxiv. 841–865, 901–924.

ment was accepted that each individual must construct his faith for himself out of the Scriptures and that each community has the power to decide what is true doctrine?'

Luther, it seems, had published in 1523 a proclamation to the effect that a Christian assembly or community had the right and the power to pronounce judgment on all doctrines, and to appoint and depose spiritual teachers. In this document he said: 'Wherever the plain Gospel' (that is, his teaching) 'is preached, there then is a Christian community, however small the number of Christians may be, and however sinful or criminal they be. Everywhere, on the other hand, where the "Gospel" is not preached, there they are mere heathen, however numerous they be, and however saintly and correct their conduct. Hence it follows unanswerably that the bishoprics, abbeys, cloisters, and all the rest of the lot, have long since been no Christian communities, although they alone have arrogated to themselves this name; therefore what this sort of people do and proclaim must be looked upon as heathenish and worldly matters.'

'Every community then,' he proceeds, 'has the right to decide about doctrine, and to appoint and depose spiritual teachers and pastors.' There is no occasion to trouble oneself about 'human laws, old traditions, habit, customs, whether emanating from the Pope or the Emperor, the princes or the bishops, whether half the world or the whole of it was held by them, whether they have been in existence for a thousand years or more. It is a mere human law that the right of deciding about religious doctrine should be confined to bishops, learned men, and Councils, for Christ has

decreed the opposite, has taken both the right and the power away from bishops, learned men, and Councils, and has bestowed them on all Christians in common, for did he not say: "My sheep know my voice; my sheep will not follow a stranger, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of a stranger." Item: however many of them came they were robbers and murderers, but the sheep would not hear them. Herein you see clearly whose is the right to judge of the doctrine. Bishops, popes, and learned men have the power to teach, but it is the sheep who must judge whether they teach Christ's words or a stranger's. Dear friends, what can these windbags say against us with all their cries of bishops, pope, councils? We must listen to them forsooth; we must respect old traditions and usages! Do you mean to say that God's Word is to yield to old customs, traditions, bishops? Never more! Let bishops and councils decree what they will; we have the Word of God, and we will stand by it and not by them, and they will have to give in to us and listen to our teaching. All bishops, chapters, cloisters, and universities that have taken away from the sheep the right of judging doctrine, are nothing else than thieves and murderers, wolves and apostates.' By his extraordinary method of argument Luther establishes from Christ's words, 'Beware of false shepherds,' the assertion: 'Thus there can be no false prophet among the hearers, but only among the teachers. Therefore all teachers must submit their doctrines to the judgment of their hearers.' 'No doctrine, no dogma is to be held valid unless it has been examined and approved of by the community.' And the congregation not only possessed the power and the right to judge of all that

was preached to them, but it was their bounden duty to do it under penalty of forfeiting the salvation of their souls and the favour of the Divine Majesty.

'Herein we see in what an unchristian manner the tyrants have behaved towards us, in that they have robbed us of this right and have appropriated it to themselves, whereby alone they have richly deserved that one should expel them from Christendom and drive them out like wolves, thieves, and murderers, who rule over us and instruct us in opposition to God's Word and will.'

'Thus we arrive at the conclusion that wherever there is a Christian community which has the Gospel, it not only has the right, but is in duty bound, to shun, to flee from, and to depose those who have baptised them Christians, to withdraw their allegiance to the authorities, and to evict bishops, abbots, and chapters, because it is plainly manifest that they are teaching and governing contrary to God's Word and will.'

'As, however, Christian communities,' Luther proceeds, 'cannot exist without God's Word, it follows surely enough from the foregoing that they must have teachers and preachers who minister to them the Word of God. And because in these last accursed times bishops and false spiritual rulers are not and will not be such teachers as they ought, and God is not to be appealed to that he should send new preachers from heaven, we must hold fast to the Scriptures and appoint teachers among ourselves, of those whom we find suited thereto, and whom God has enlightened with understanding and endowed with gifts for the work.' 'Every Christian is taught by God and anointed as

priest. Each one has not only the right and the power to teach the Word of God, but is in duty bound to teach it, at peril of forfeiting his soul and the grace of God.' 'When a Christian is in a place where there are no other Christians'—that is, no adherents of Luther's teaching—'he needs no other credentials than that he is a Christian, inwardly called and anointed by God, and it is his duty to preach and teach the Gospel to the erring heathens or non-Christians, out of brotherly love, although no human authority has called him to it.' 'When, however, he finds himself in a place where other Christians are, who have the same power and right as himself, he must not then put himself forward to teach, but must wait to be chosen and called out, to receive the command of others to preach and to teach.' But Luther surpasses himself: 'A Christian has such power that even in the midst of other Christians, without being chosen by men, he may and must come forward and teach when he sees that the appointed teacher is himself mistaken.' Bishops and other spiritual overseers, however, 'who sit in the seat of the Devil, and are like unto wolves, are as little suited for the office of preachers and the care of souls as Turks and Jews.' 'These men ought to drive donkeys and lead dogs. Tyrants they are and scoundrels, who behave towards us as apostles of the Devil.' [1]

Among a number of other preachers who acted in accordance with the Lutheran maxim that every 'hearer was bound to judge for himself what was true doctrine, and to come forward and teach, was Thomas Münzer, who, after being for some time a faithful believer in the Wittenberg evangelist, suddenly dis-

[1] *Collected Works*, xxii. 140–151.

covered that the latter's doctrine was not true, and that he himself had been inspired by Heaven to proclaim the right Gospel, which was a different one from Luther's.

After leaving Zwickau 'for the sake of the Word of God' Münzer had gone to Bohemia, and was ambitious of making the town of Prague ring with the music of a new faith. 'In Bohemia,' he wrote, God would do wonderful things with his chosen people; here the new Church would be set up, and the people of Bohemia would be a light to the whole world. Münzer, like Luther, gave himself out to be a messenger from heaven. He would stake his life on it, he said, that God had called him and had made 'his scythe sharp to cut down the harvest.'

As, however, the Bohemians did not believe in his mission, and drove him out of the country, he betook himself to Nordhausen, and thence to Alstedt, a little town in the Saxon Electorate, where he was appointed preacher in the year 1523, and where he married a nun.

In conjunction with other preachers, and quite regardless of Luther, Münzer instituted a new service of God in the German language; he rejected infant baptism and the belief in the real presence of Christ at the Sacrament, and very soon set up another 'new gospel,' entirely at variance with Luther's. Luther, so he wrote, had bewildered Christendom with a false faith.

'You make yourself appear an archdevil,' he writes to Luther, 'in that from the text of Isaiah, without any understanding, you make God the cause of evil. Is not this the very most heinous punishment of God upon you? You are still blinded, and you want to be a blind leader of the world, and then you go whimpering

to God that you are a poor sinner and a worthless worm with your accursed humility. You've concocted also, with your fantastic conceit, out of your St. Augustine, an abominable rigmarole about free-will, throwing contempt on all mankind. Luther was a poor sort of reformer, a mere milksop who gave us soft cushions for our tender flesh; he exalted faith too much and thought too little of works; his dead preaching of faith did more harm to the gospel than the teaching of the papists. "You have shot wide of the mark," they preach to us now. "It is faith that will justify us and not works." This is an absurd way of talking; faith like this is not worth a farthing. Those who preach the Lutheran gospel put faith above everything. Will not the reasonable light of nature admonish thus? "Ah, if nothing more is wanted than faith, how easy a matter it all is! Yes, without doubt you are a believer; you were born of Christian parents; you have never doubted; you will stand firm." "Yes, yes, I am a good Christian. Ah, how easily I can be saved! *Pfui! pfui!* those priests! Oh, the accursed men! Why did they make it all so bitter for me?" And so the people go off with the idea that they can get to heaven with sporting and feasting and merry-making, and do not read or hear to the end what is written about faith or works, and think they will become good evangelicals by strings of pious boasting words.'

'This is all a tremendous, blockheaded error, but it is welcomed by multitudes because it sanctions a licentious life; it enables them to cover their shame with a cloak; it preaches to them a honey-sweet Christ who has suffered all things in their stead and who gives them everything "free and gratis." The present-day theologians make their boast of the Gospel, fill the

world with their books and their scribbling, babble from morning to night, "Believe, believe;" and yet they deny the origins of faith, mock the Spirit of God, and believe next to nothing, as you see. Those who teach faith only are no better than fatted sows. Christ said with intention: "My sheep hear my voice, but a hireling's voice they will not hear." But that man is a hireling who makes the way to eternal life unruly, lets the thorns and thistles grow upon it, saying only: "Believe, believe; stand fast in a strong, strong faith, so strong that one could drive stakes into the earth with it!"'

In his printed exposure of the false faith he complains that Luther, 'that venomous black scorpion, and the new evangelists, his followers, poison the Holy Spirit of the Scriptures, will not tolerate any contradiction, but, on the contrary, relegate all their opponents to the Devil.' Their teaching, he says, tends to no other result than the enfranchisement of the flesh, for they are 'creatures of the belly.' 'Their priests are all marrying old women with large fortunes: for they are beginning to fear that they may come to need. Yea, verily, they're fine evangelical people; they have indeed a firm and steadfast faith. He would come off well indeed who trusted in their specious masks and chatter, and their monkish idolatry; for they puff themselves up, and dress up their "verbal" faith beyond all description. They've no wit or sense left, with all their foolish prattle about faith, and they abuse everything that they do not wish to believe.'

'Ah, dear sirs, do not be quite so audacious with your nonsensical belief as to send all poor folk who don't agree with you to the Devil, as has become your

habit. For this fashion of bedeviling people is now being carried to the utmost extremity by those usurious evangelists who exalt themselves to such a degree as to say that nobody is a Christian who does not accept their literal faith.'

But if Münzer differed entirely from Luther in the above respect, he was completely at one with him in repudiating all authority of the Church. Like Luther he proclaimed war to the death against the Pope, the clergy, and the monks. 'They are sent by their father the Devil,' he said, 'for the punishment of the people who refuse to hear the living Word of God; . . . in short, they are accursed people who have no rights or inheritance, whether of God or of men.' 'They have wasted their lives in gluttony and wine-bibbing from their youth up, and all their lives long they have not spent one day of suffering for the sake of the truth, nor do they ever mean to spend one.' Describing the cloisters as dens of inquity, he incited the people to burn and destroy them. He insisted that monks, nuns, and all Catholic ecclesiastics should be driven out as open antagonists of the Gospel, and be exterminated with the sword.

Münzer also rejected outward revelation. 'Man,' he said, 'received the revelation of God not through the Church, not by proclamation of the Divine Word, still less through the dead letter of the Bible, but only through the Spirit of God, who speaks directly to men. The living, direct Word of God, speaking to the individual heart, begot faith; it must be heard in the depths of the soul and all possible diligence be used in order to be able to prophesy by means of it. Visions and dreams were vouchsafed to us men and women

while in a state of contrition, trembling and quaking on account of our sins; we must wait and watch for them in deepest penitence, but we must also ask for signs from God to show if our belief is the right one. All who seek after these signs with great earnestness, yea, with vehemence and passion, find a hearing; God delights to quench their thirst, and holds converse with them, as he did with Abraham and Jacob.'

'All this sort of thing is well-pleasing to the masses,' said a chronicler of the times; 'it delights them to think that they can talk with God and receive signs; for human nature is inquisitive, and delights in finding out great mysteries and secrets. It flattered the vanity of the common people also to think that they might themselves become saints, and more enlightened than the students.'

Münzer described his teaching as the 'true Gospel,' the 'plain Word of God,' which was to found the pure Church of the elect, and to renew the face of the earth.

For the spread of this gospel, however, it would be necessary not to shrink from bodily conflict and to have recourse to the might of the sword, and both by sermons and letters he appealed in the most impressive language to the Elector Frederic and Duke George of Saxony to help Him in his campaign. 'You dear and best-beloved rulers of Saxony,' he said in a sermon preached before these princes at the castle of Alstedt, 'form your opinions straight from the statements of God, and do not let yourselves be led astray by your hypocritical priests. For the stone, hewn without hands from the rock, has become great; the poor laymen and peasants see it much more clearly than you

do. Yea, God be thanked, it has become so large that if you lords, or your neighbours, have a mind to persecute on account of the Gospel you will be driven away by your own people: this I know for certain. Yes, the stone is large, and the dim-sighted world has long since feared that it would fall upon them, even when it was little; what shall we do now, when it has become so great and powerful? You beloved rulers, stand firmly on the corner stone, as St. Peter did; seek only God's righteousness and take up the cause of the Gospel valiantly. God stands so close to you, closer than you think. If you could fully realise the peril of Christendom, you would be seized with as ardent zeal as was King Jehu.'

While Münzer was exhorting the princes in this wise to do great things for God, he was at the same time organising a league in Alstedt, the members of which pledged themselves with an oath to combine together for the foundation of a new kingdom of God. In this kingdom, according to his own statement, all Christians were to be on an equality; all possessions were to be common property and to be divided among the members as occasion or necessity required. All Christians were to join this league; and any princes, counts, or gentlemen who, after being advertised of the league, refused to become members, were to have their heads cut off or to be hanged.[1]

Münzer obtained an immense following, especially among the common people, who flocked in crowds from Eisleben, Mansfeld, Sangerhausen, Frankenhausen, Querfurt, Halle, Aschersleben, and other places to hear him preach at Alstedt. 'The poor thirsting people,'

[1] Münzer's *Bekenntniss*, B l. A 2–3.

he writes, 'craved so ardently for the truth that all the streets were packed full of people to hear it.'

His audacity increased with the number of his adherents. 'I will persecute my enemies,' so he threatened the council of Sangerhausen; 'I will not stop till they are brought to shame and confusion; they shall be trampled under my feet even though they be the biggest of big grandees,' and so forth.

At Münzer's instigation, a popular pilgrim chapel near Alstedt was plundered and burnt, and such a riot ensued that the tax-gatherer at Alstedt implored the Elector of Saxony and his councillors to take strong measures against Münzer. For otherwise, he said, it was to be feared that the people would collect together in swarms, as this preacher had prophesied, and harass and plunder the land, and cause such distress as had never been heard of. For the people hung so on his words.[1]

Having been compelled to leave Alstedt, Münzer now went to Mühlhausen and stirred up the populace there to violent sedition. He told them that by a 'servant of God rich in grace,' who would arise in the spirit of Elias, the godless ones would be hurled down from their seats, and the mean ones and the base ones would be exalted. God despised the great lords and princes, and had given them to the world in his fury; now, however, he meant to take them away again in exasperation. 'Dear comrades, let us make the hole wider,' thus he exhorted the people after the manner of Ezekiel, 'so that all the world may see and understand who are the great ones of the earth, who have thus blasphemously made God into the likeness of a painted

[1] Seidemann, p. 40; O. Merz, *Thomas Münzer*, i. 13-32.

mannikin. "Behold," says Jeremiah, "I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant. . . . I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof; they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail, for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee." He was referring to the peasants, those hard-working people who have lived all their lives on sour food, so that they might stuff the throats of the godless tyrants.'

In Mühlhausen Münzer found a rich soil for his teaching. The evangelical movement had already begun there in the first month of the year 1523, under the influence of an apostate Cistercian monk, Heinrich Pfeiffer. In the streets, and soon also in the church, Pfeiffer and other preachers preached against the bishops, the priests, and the monks, and found ready listeners 'both foreigners and natives.' 'The common people heard them gladly, and although some of the council were against them the others said it did not concern the council at all, but only the priests and the monks, who had made themselves very odious to the people with their bans and their indulgences; and it was,' says the Mühlhausen chronicle, 'all the fashion to talk about abuses.'

In a short time an insurrection took place in the town, and cloisters and parsonages were ransacked. And then it was seen how much the business did concern the council also; 'for the citizens, and many

strangers also, men from Eichfeld who were followers of Pfeiffer, flocked in armed bands outside the council house, attempted to kill the gentlemen of the council.' The evangelical movement ended, in the summer of 1523, in a victory of the commune over the council, which was compelled, among other things, to pledge itself not to prohibit the preaching of the evangel.

'Pfeiffer soon became a widely known man, and a zealot for liberty.' In the same year, 1523, a proposal was made to him by several artisans at Langensalza to come thither and preach. Working men and their wives went about saying 'they wished to share with the rich and to wear red cloaks.' Twelve men formed an association in Langensalza, and soon two hundred and fifty and more had bound themselves together in a fraternity. The chief ringleader was the shoemaker Melchior Wigand, who had 'formerly followed wars, and later on had led a loose life with fighting and other things.'[1]

'An entirely new and free evangelical life was also inaugurated at Orlamünde. Carlstadt, to whom the chair of professor and the pulpit had been interdicted at Wittenberg, had betaken himself to Orlamünde, in order to find there a new sphere of labour. 'You bind me hand and foot, and then you beat me,' he complains against Luther. 'For was it not being bound and beaten when you wrote against me, preached and published, and procured that my books should be taken out of the printing-press, and that I should be forbidden to preach and to write?'[2] As a minister of

[1] Seidemann, *Beiträge*, xiv. 513.

[2] Erbkam, pp. 218–219. See Seidemann, *Thomas Münzer*, pp. 34–35, where similar complaints of Münzer's are quoted. A pamphlet of Carlstadt's, several sheets of which were already printed, was suppressed

Christ, chosen by the community of the Orlamündites, and supported by a numerous following, he began his career of activity here with iconoclasm and the overthrow of all established forms of worship. He dissolved schools, abolished the mass, confession, fasts, and festivals, ordered his congregation to receive both the bread and the wine at the Lord's Supper in a sitting or a kneeling posture. With regard to free examination of the Scriptures and universal priesthood, his opinions were in the closest possible agreement with Luther's, and from his own interpretation, 'compelled,' as he says, by the inward testimony of his spirit, guided 'by the plain words of Scripture,' he arrived at the conclusion that at the Lord's Supper we do not partake of the real flesh and blood of Christ, but only eat and drink simple bread and wine in commemoration of Christ's death upon the cross. Belief in the real presence, he said, among other statements on which he based his teaching, was irreconcilable with the doctrine of universal priesthood, unless one believed that all Christians, men and women, had the power to transform bread and wine, which would be making all mankind equal to Christ, and exalting them to the rank of mediators of the new covenant.

In order to set forth clearly and consistently the doctrine of the universal priesthood and the equality of all Christians, he laid aside his 'unchristian' title of Doctor and had himself addressed as 'Brother Andres' or 'dear neighbour;' he also gave up his

by the electoral court at the suggestion of the Wittenberg University (*Corp. Reform.* i. 570–572). 'Luther's domineering nature,' says the Protestant Lang, 'could tolerate no one near him who followed his own bent' (*M. Luther: ein religiös. Characterbild* [1870], p. 133).

ecclesiastical garb and wore a grey coat and a felt hat.

He also endeavoured to prove from Scripture texts that 'sin also was good in the sight of God,' because 'it was created, and all created things were good.' 'Sinners with their sinful works fulfil the will of God.' 'Proof: that not even the smallest leaf can move without the will of God.' Man can neither think nor will, nor stretch out a hand or a leg, if God does not will that he should. Hence it follows that we cannot think anything evil, nor will or do any evil, unless God ordains it. God Himself has a double will: a sinister, wrathful, and temporal will, and a gracious, eternal, and unchangeable will.

Just as Münzer's followers in Alstedt and elsewhere prided themselves on having received the true Gospel, so too the Orlamündites considered themselves the one true sect of Christians who, according to Luther's principle, 'discerned true doctrine.' Carlstadt demonstrated out of the Bible that he and his disciples were not bound to have any regard in their proceedings to Luther, the 'new Wittenberg pope,' the 'gluttonous ecclesiastic' who led 'an antichristian life.' 'We were not bound to hold over our teaching and our actions,' he said, 'till our neighbours and the Wittenberg gluttons come round to us.' Each community, be it small or great, must do what it thinks right and wait for nobody. Equally little were they to trouble themselves about the antagonism of the Catholic world: for the Catholics were 'idolatrous Christians,' 'double-dyed heathens.'

'All hurtful things must be taken from them, snatched out of their hands, no matter how much they

wept, raged, or cursed; the day would come when they, who now swore or cursed, would be thankful to us.' 'Where Christians rule they must have respect to no superior authority, but freely hack about and overturn whatever is opposed to God. Of such things there is abundance—namely, masses, images, and the flesh of idols which the priests feed on.'[1]

Carlstadt had also in view other reforms, or innovations, which struck deep at the roots of the whole Christian life and all the fabric of society: he went so far as to advocate polygamy. In January 1524 Luther wrote as follows to the Saxon chancellor, Brück, concerning Carlstadt's statement that a man might have two wives: 'He (Luther) could not on principle reject bigamy, for it was not opposed to the Holy Scriptures; but he considered it an offence when it occurred among Christians, who were bound to abstain even from things permitted.' In his published sermons also on the first book of Moses Luther says: 'Men are not forbidden to have more wives than one. I cannot prevent it at present, but I would never advocate it.'[2]

Luther's endeavours to arrive at a Christian understanding with Carlstadt utterly failed. After a disputation in the tavern of the Black Bear at Jena they came to angry words in the presence of several witnesses; they called each other liars, and accused each other mutually of being prompted by vainglory and ambition. Carlstadt declared that Luther preached the Gospel falsely, and contradicted himself continually, so that at the end of a treatise he asserted exactly the

[1] De Wette, ii. 459.

[2] *Collected Works*, xxxiii. 322–324. See my pamphlet *Ein zweites Wort an meine Kritiker*, pp. 90–91 (new edition of 1895, pp. 92–93).

opposite of what he had said at the beginning; he undertook to prove this in an open disputation at Wittenberg or Erfurt. At the end of the discussion he emphasised his statements with the wish: 'If what Luther says is true, God grant that the Devil may tear me in pieces before you all.' Luther gave his adversary a gold gulden as a token and pledge that he was free to write against him as much as he liked, and that he himself would shun no fighting.

The people of Orlamünde, taking up the cudgels for Carlstadt, reproached Luther in a letter with being no member of the veritable Christ, because he abused and slandered them publicly without giving them a hearing: they were ready, they said, with the help of God, to give account before all men of their faith, and of the wealth of works their faith produced. Let Luther come himself to Orlamünde, and, if they erred in aught, rebuke them kindly, not with abusive language and threats of expulsion, and show them a better way. Luther came, but the conferences led to no result. A shoemaker, who had the Bible at his fingers' ends, tried to prove from passages of the Old Testament that Luther was labouring under error. To Luther's protest: 'You have condemned me or damned me,' the shoemaker answered: 'And so you will be damned; I hold you and each one damned so long as he speaks or teaches in opposition to God and God's truth.' 'I thought myself lucky not to have been driven out with stones and mud,' wrote Luther, 'for some of these good people blessed me with the words: "Begone in the name of a thousand devils; and may you break your neck before you get out of the town!"'[1]

[1] De Wette, ii. 579. The writings published by Martin Reinhard, a

By command of the Elector Frederic, Carlstadt was banished from Orlamünde. In two farewell letters, the one to the men, the other to the women of his parish, he subscribed himself 'Andreas Bodenstein, driven away by Martin Luther, unheard and unvanquished.' To his friends in Saxony he said that in Luther's ranting and raging they could see the awful chastisement of God on those who did not accept his grace; Luther was a man of violence, a senseless fool, a horned ass, in whom God's wrath was being manifested.

Carlstadt went as a fugitive to Strasburg, and then to Basle, and gained over many of the new preachers, notably Zwingli and Oecolampadius, to his doctrine of the Eucharist. Towards the end of the year 1524 he came to Rotenburg on the Tauber, and ingratiated himself there with the common people by his preaching on the removal of popular grievances. The Latin teacher at the school of Rotenburg, Valentine Ickelshauer, who had studied at Wittenberg, wrote for the benefit of Carlstadt a complaint 'to all Christians of the great injustice and tyranny which Endressen Bodenstein von Carlstadt was now suffering from Luther of Wittenberg.' 'I know a good deal about your goings on,' he says of Luther in this document. 'I was a student at Wittenberg for a time. But I will not speak of the gold ring on your finger that made many people angry, nor will I tell of the elegant apartment, over the water, where one used to drink and make merry with other "doctors" and fine gentlemen, though I often

preacher at Jena and a friend of Carlstadt's, *Wess sich Dr. Carlstadt mit Dr. Luther beredt zu Jena*, and *Die Handlung Dr. Luther's mit dem Rath und Gemeine der Stadt Orlamünde* (Walch, xv. 2422–2435).

heard my schoolfellows complain about it, and it did not please me, I can tell you, that you should all sit there over your beer, heedless of so many more important things. Concerning this trifling matter, by the way, the servant of a Leipzig tradesman complained once in Pirkheimer's house at Nuremberg that he did not think much of you; you could play the lute very well, and you wore shirts with frills and toggery. For all which I longed to tell him he was a fool, so great was the love I had for you; but I did not yet know that this mad exuberance of spirits in you was the forerunner of all the excesses you now commit. Well, I was mistaken in you. But it was displeasing to me even at the time that you should excuse the wild, godless life at Wittenberg as you did, saying: "We cannot all be angels;" in spite of the roundabout interpretations with which they explained away the meaning of the verse (Matthew vii. 20): 'By their fruits ye shall know them," just as now, when you boast of your true doctrine of faith and love, crying out that your weak life is alone to be punished. No, we judge no sinners, whatever they may do, but we say, where Christian faith is not followed by works, there the faith has either not been rightly preached or not rightly apprehended, and we say of you what has long been said of Rome: The nearer to Wittenberg the further from Christ.'

Luther defended his teaching against the attacks of Carlstadt, Thomas Münzer, and others in his pamphlet 'Wider die himmlischen Propheten, von den Bildern und Sacrament.'

In this pamphlet he said that Carlstadt, who had fallen away from the kingdom of Christ and made

shipwreck of his faith, was Satan's instrument for ruining the whole teaching of the Gospel by artful handling of the Scriptures. Carlstadt was prosecuting his work without any call to it, for if his ministry had been the result of an inward call from God, it would have been accompanied by miracles. For God, he said, does not usher in a new order to replace the old one, without mighty signs to bear witness to it. Therefore one cannot believe in anybody who fights against the established ordinances of God, because he feels himself called inwardly in the spirit to do so, unless he performs miracles at the same time. For himself, however, and his own proceedings against the established order, Luther did not think this qualification indispensable.

Carlstadt had no right, Luther said, to complain of being driven out of Saxony. The only fault to be found was that the man had had far too lenient princes to deal with. There were many princes who, if such a piece of work had been got up in their dominions, would just have knocked all the nonsense out of his head with a sharp steel blade; and who could have blamed them? Did not the princes of Saxony have patience enough with the stupid, clod-pated fellow? Yes indeed, a great deal too much. If they had been more ready with their swords, the populace by the river Saale would have remained more tranquil and orderly.

As for the pictures and images, Luther said he had not forbidden their being done away with by legitimate means, but Carlstadt had proceeded in a ruffianly manner and had made the mob frantic, turbulent, and insolent; and when one looked at the matter in the true light it had been done as a mere 'legal work,'

without any soul or faith in it, and yet it had puffed up the hearts of the people with pride, as if they had done a special service to God, which after all was nothing more or less than teaching works of free-will.

Against the doctrine of the freedom of the human will Luther expressed himself at this period in the most unmeasured language; indeed, in his treatise 'Vom knechtischen Willen,' directed against Erasmus, he did not shrink from thoroughly fatalistic statements. 'God,' he said, 'must be a God according to whose will everything happened; for even the heathens had endowed their gods and their Jupiter with a will—Fate, as they called it—from whose eternal, immutable decrees no human power or wisdom could escape. The two postulates, almighty power and eternal foresight, knocked to pieces all free-will. Reason itself must recognise that there could be no free-will either in God or man.' He believed in a dual battle of a good and an evil principle in men. The will of man, he said, stands midway between God and Satan, and lets itself be led and driven like a horse or any other animal. If God takes possession of it (the will), it goes wherever and howsoever God wills. If the Devil takes hold of it, it goes where and as the Devil wills. And the human will is not free, or master of itself to choose which of the two it will obey, but these two powers fight and struggle together to get possession of it. He drew a distinction between the secret will, and the open, or revealed will, of God. 'God,' he said, 'proclaims his laws and his mercy to all mankind, but his secret will ordains who and how many shall be partakers of his grace.'

'If we are to appeal to Moses in justification of the mob's destroying pictures and images,' Luther goes on

to say in his pamphlet against the 'heavenly prophets,' 'it must also be conceded that each one has a right to proceed against and put to death adulterers, murderers, and those who are disobedient; for the people of Israel were just as much commanded by God to kill all those evil-doers as to destroy all the images. But let us look at the matter in the right light, and say these teachers of sin and these Mosaic prophets must not be confounded with Moses—we will leave Moses altogether out of it. How does this please you, dear revolutionists?'

'Moses was sent to the Israelites only,' he goes on, 'and in no wise concerns us heathens and Christians.' True we learn and observe the Ten Commandments, but only for this reason: that the 'natural laws have never been so well and systematically codified as by Moses. And I would that some more rules in secular matters were taken from Moses, as, for instance, the laws of divorce, of jubilee years and years of immunity, of tithes, and so forth, by which the world would be better governed than it is now with the present laws of interest, trade, and marriage.'

With regard to the observance of Sunday, he says that nobody is bound to keep Sunday holy. 'The observance of the Sabbath or of Sunday is not of necessity, nor on account of the commandment of Moses, but because nature teaches that one must occasionally have a day of rest, for the refreshment of man and beast, which natural reason Moses also has regard to in his Sabbath, inasmuch as he, like Christ, makes the Sabbath subservient to man. For if it is merely to be kept for the sake of rest, it is clear that whoever does not require rest may break the Sabbath

and rest on another day, according as nature dictates. Another reason for observing it is that God's Word may be preached and heard.'[1] According to Luther, Sunday was only an outward and hence an unessential ordinance. In his Larger Catechism he says: 'In the Old Testament God set apart the seventh day, and commanded that it should be kept holy above all the others. And as far as mere outward observance goes the command was given to the Jews only; they were to rest from hard work, so that both men and beasts should renew their strength and not be worn out by incessant labour. Therefore this commandment in its outward respect has nothing to do with us Christians; for it is quite an external thing, like other ordinances of the Old Testament relating to special customs, persons, times, and conditions, which have all been annulled or abrogated by Christ. But in order, for the sake of simple unlearned Christians, to arrive at a Christian understanding of what God requires from us in this commandment, mark that we do not keep a day holy for the sake of the intelligent and learned Christians among us, for these do not need it in this respect. But we observe Sunday for the sake of bodily reasons and necessities, for the masses of the people, manservants and maidservants, who work the whole week and need a day of rest, and above all for the reason that on such a day of rest people can assemble together to attend divine service. The latter, however, is not, as with the Jews, confined to a stated time. But as from antiquity the Sunday has been devoted to this purpose it should still be kept apart for these uses.'[2] 'It is no matter,' he says about

[1] *Collected Works*, xxix. 136, 143, 146, 157, 167, 173–174. [2] Bd. 21, 48.

Sunday in the explanation of the third commandment, 'whether we observe it or not; our consciences are free. Whoso does not wish to observe it, let him go on working; we shall not blame him, or eject him. It rests with our will and pleasure whether we keep Sunday or no.'

This opinion of Luther and his followers had very serious consequences among the people. When the masses no longer believed that they were obeying a command of God in keeping Sunday sacred, there no longer remained any essential reason for so doing. And why was not everybody, not only the learned people, to be counted among the number of intelligent Christians of whom Luther distinctly admitted that they did not need any Sunday? There is no difficulty in explaining the desecration of Sunday, which increased from year to year, and which contemporaries complain so bitterly of.

In his refutation of Carlstadt's teaching concerning the holy sacrament of the altar Luther recognises the endless complications which were already beginning to result from the principles of free interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, which he himself had established. We shall see, he said with anxious misgivings, that very soon those who measure and criticise the Scriptures by the standard of sophistical reasoning and casuistical subtlety will come to this, that they will deny that Christ is God. 'You will be astonished to see how clever reason will become, especially among the people, who will shake their heads and say: "Yes, Godhood and manhood are two different things, separated from each other as absolutely as time and eternity; how, then, can one be the other, or how can any one say man is God?"'

Already Christ is being reduced to a mere moral example, a lawgiver and a ruler; if they go on in this way, no single article of the Faith will be left standing.

He admonishes his readers most emphatically to beware of false prophets and their teaching, 'even though all who are of our way of thinking should fall away from the sacrament of the altar.' 'What are we to do with the Gospel'—that is to say, the doctrine of justification through faith alone and the non-freedom of the human will—'in which lies the greater power? Is not all the world falling away from it and fighting against it? How few are those who hold to it rightly! It is no wonder that multitudes err; the wonder is that there are any who do not err, however few they be.' The followers of the false prophets could not pretend that they had not been admonished and corrected. 'Have they not known that I have condemned these prophets as being of the spirit of the Devil? And what good has it done, but only to make them more obdurate, and to drive them to oppose me with secret cunning?'[1]

Luther's prediction that deniers of Christ's Godhead would arise, had already been proved true by a lawsuit opened up by a member of the Nuremberg council against three painters of that town. These men, commonly called the godless painters, were Georg Penz and the brothers Hans Sebald and Barthel Behaim. Summoned before a court of law for deistical opinions, they made a straightforward confession. Georg Penz, in answer to the questions addressed to him, said 'he was inclined to believe that there was a God, but he did not know in truth what to think about the nature

[1] *Collected Works*, xxix. 170, 216, 260, 266.

of that God; concerning Christ he had no definite opinions; in the Holy Ghost he could not believe; as to the sacraments of the altar and baptism, he did not think much of them; he recognised no superior authority besides God alone.'

Barthel Behaim deposed that 'he did not believe in the Lord's Supper and baptism; he considered them both mere human inventions; neither could he believe the Holy Scriptures. For two whole years he had listened to the sermons of the preacher Osiander, but he did not know how it was, what the preachers said might impress the generality of people, but it was at bottom mere rubbish. Neither did he see any corresponding fruit in those who preached. He intended to remain in this frame of mind until the truth was borne in upon him.' His brother, Hans Sebald, spoke in the same strain. 'He had not been able hitherto to understand the Lord's Supper; he must have patience and wait till God enlightened him. He had heard a great deal of preaching, but did not find he was any better for it. About baptism he knew nothing, could neither praise nor blame it; there was no virtue in the water.' Veit Wirsperger, cross-examined concerning his intercourse with the brothers Behaim, said: 'He knew these brothers to be people who spoke slightingly of the Faith. One of the brothers, called Barthel, had said he knew no Christ, and had nothing to say about him; it was just the same to him as when he heard tell of Duke Ernest, who had gone away to a mountain. The brother Sebald was no less headstrong and devilish, and was convinced that these Christian people were beside themselves, and their wives also, whom they had so misled with their notions that they did not know what would

be the end of it. Both the brothers carried Münzer's and Carlstadt's little books about with them.' The three painters were banished from the town at the end of January 1525, because 'they had proved themselves to be so godless and heathen, and had also shown contempt for all preachers, and all secular authority as well.' As a special reason for their banishment it was alleged that 'it was to be feared that the presence of these people would lead to much erroneous opinion among a great many people in the town and outside it, so that in future it would not be sufficient to preach to the community collectively, but each individual would have to be addressed separately. This would be an intolerable nuisance not only for all the preachers, but also for the members of the Nuremberg council.[1]

'But with what right,' asked writers who held to the orthodox Church, 'can Carlstadt and others be deprived of the liberty to overthrow baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Lutheran institutions, if Luther is to be free to repudiate the five other sacraments, and to help in turning the century-old edifice of the established Church into a heap of ruins? If Luther is to be allowed, by virtue of the principle of free interpretation of Scripture, to pronounce this or that passage genuinely evangelical, and to denounce opposite opinions on the question as detestable and devilish, why may not Carlstadt and Münzer, or whatever other names these Scripture interpreters call themselves by, set up other passages as alone instinct with Gospel truth and revealed by the Divine Spirit, and fight for them with the same freedom as is vouch-

[1] See Kolde, *Kirchengeschichtliche Studien*, pp. 243–249; J. C. Jörg, *Deutschland in der Revolutionsperiode von* 1522–1526 *und* 731–733.

safed to Luther and the Wittenbergites? Complete religious anarchy, it was said, would be the result of Christian liberty, such as Luther insisted on, of freedom with regard to the Bible, which, as he asserted, was 'clear and intelligible to all people,' and of his theory that 'each individual is a fully competent judge of all those who wish to instruct him, and can only be taught inwardly by God.'

The assertion that 'Holy Scripture is given to each one for the "confirmation of his faith," and is the one and only right guide for Christians,' was laid down as the first principle of 'Christian freedom,' both among the followers of Münzer and Carlstadt and all the many different parties which had formed themselves out of old sects, and which were grouped together under the name of Anabaptists. In many of their doctrines and forms of worship these parties diverged widely from one another, but they all held unanimously to the opinion that infant baptism ought to be abolished, because there was no mention of it anywhere in the Bible; the Saviour had said, 'Whosoever believeth, let him be baptised,' and therefore the possession of faith must precede baptism.

But the question how the faith which was imperatively necessary also for the right understanding of the Bible was to be acquired was answered differently by the different sects. If Luther had declared that each one was inwardly taught by God alone, others went further and asserted that so long as this inward revelation had not taken place it was impossible to attain to any certainty of faith.

Thus, for instance, the Nuremberg schoolmaster Johann Denck stated before the town council that he

held the Scriptures, with Peter, to be a lantern which gave light in the darkness; but the darkness of his unbelief was so great that he could not possibly understand the Scriptures aright in all places. 'If I do not understand them,' he said, 'how am I to get faith by reading them? That would mean faith coming of itself, if I received it before God had revealed it to me. Yes, he who will not wait for the revelation of God, but takes upon himself the work which belongs alone to the Spirit of God and Christ, turns the secrets of God, taken out of Scripture, into a waste and howling wilderness, and drags the grace of our God into the mire. Therefore St. Peter says further that "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." This prophecy or inspiration of the Holy Ghost each one must be convinced of individually; otherwise his faith is false and worthless.'

Others, like Thomas Münzer and the prophets of Zwickau, felt certain of this 'discerning of the spirit,' 'inward inspiration,' and 'revelation of God,' and on the strength of it they proclaimed another kingdom of God, which was a complete remodelling of the organisation both of ecclesiastical and civic society.

This kind of teaching, which had gained such a large following in Zwickau and Alstedt and many places in Saxony and Thuringia, became also widely popular in Switzerland. In Zürich, where Ulrich Zwingli had preached the new gospel, now in agreement and now in disagreement with Luther, there sprang up in the year 1523 a party of radical Bible interpreters who denounced the 'pretended reformer' as a hellish dragon who preached falsely and senselessly

and delivered over the precious Word of God to the judgment of secular authorities. 'You have no right to call in the decision of the town council,' said one of the spokesmen of the party to Zwingli; 'judgment has already been given: the Spirit of God is the Judge.' 'We are right to break with the teaching of the preachers,' said the new Anabaptist Scripture interpreters, speaking against the Zwinglians, 'because they have departed from the doctrine which they taught at first out of the Gospel, and which we learnt, causing distress and confusion, and living and behaving contrary to their first teaching. They now, under Christian spiritual semblance, use and appeal to the secular instead of the spiritual sword and power in matters of religion and faith, a practice against which evangelical preachers have nevertheless long written denouncing it as tyranny.'

Among these so-called Anabaptists there were many men of noble aspirations, but many also whose real object was to overturn the existing order of society and to introduce equality and communism.[1]

This last was an end that commended itself especially to the poor, who consequently rallied in crowds round the new teachers and put on godly countenances, and, whether they were tailors, shoemakers, or furriers, themselves preached and taught of a kingdom of God in which there was no distinction between men, or in money and property, and maintained that it was the duty of Christians to burn down cloisters and castles, and to kill all who did not conform to this kingdom of God.

[1] Concerning the origin of Anabaptism see Keller, p. 275, where there is much that is untenable, but much also worthy of attention.

Revolutionary preachers of this description went about South-Western Germany and Switzerland in great numbers after the year 1524. In St. Gall, for instance, according to the report of an eye-witness, the number of preachers was so great that on Sundays and festivals one came everywhere upon crowds of citizens who were listening to some Anabaptist preacher. 'There, there,' one peasant would say to another, 'that's the right Gospel. Look, look, how those old priests have lied and cheated us with their preaching; the scoundrels ought all to be flogged to death.' The speakers of the Catholic cantons said in 1524 at the Swiss Assembly, that the people had become so insubordinate, in consequence of the religious innovations, that they refused to pay interest, tithes, and other imposts, and were under the fixed impression that everything should be shared in common; the magistrates were afraid that this state of things would lead to the downfall of Switzerland.

Soon it came to pass that the most outrageous deeds were often perpetrated by those who had the 'clearest discernment of Scripture and the most godly countenances and ecstasies.' Thus, for instance, at St. Gall, as the Bernese chronicler Anshelm relates, one brother cut off another brother's head, in the presence of his father and mother, 'in fulfilment of the heavenly Father's will;' at Esslingen, at an assembly of the Brothers, one of them trampled his wife to death with his feet, both of them saying: 'Now is the Father's will accomplished.' Even on the scaffold the fratricide expressed his conviction that he had carried out the commandment of God in killing his brother. Under the plea of 'the Father's will' profligacy and other crimes were condoned and excused. 'It was not he who committed

crimes,' said one of the preachers, 'but God the Father was working through him; God Himself had been present with him.' 'So too,' says Anshelm, 'there are some of them, men learned in Scripture also, who have become so frenzied in their minds that they will no more read a single syllable, nor listen to any voice of man, but they consider themselves guided entirely by the voice of the heavenly Father.' The Government of St. Gall repeatedly issued the command that in future none were to assert that God the Father had communicated anything to them, or that He spoke or worked through them.

In addition to the 'terrible and corrupting deeds of the godly-visaged men' the new interpreters of Scripture also proceeded little by little to the most eccentric behaviour, from an exaggerated application of Luther's injunction that, in the interpretation of the Bible, we must keep to the simple sense and carry it out as literally as possible. The inhabitants of St. Gall were seen running out of all the gates in all four directions of the compass, to invite people to the kingdom of God, because it said in the Bible: 'Go into all the world and preach the Gospel.' In Appenzell 1,200 Baptists once assembled themselves together, and, in obedience to the saying, 'Take no thought what ye shall eat,' waited for the food which the heavenly Father would send them, till the pangs of hunger caused them to disperse. Whole troops of these fanatics ran hither and thither about the land, without staff, shoes, or purse, and preached from the roofs of houses; for the Bible said: 'What ye hear in the ear that preach ye on the housetops.'

Many men forsook their wives and children and went begging about the country with the Brothers, for

had not the Saviour insisted that we should forsake father, mother, and everything for his sake? Others burnt their Bibles, in fulfilment of the text: 'The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.' The 'new sect and peculiar Church of the Anabaptists,' says Sebastian Franck in his chronicle, 'arose out of the "letter" of the Scriptures, and drew many, even pious hearts which longed after God, with specious arguments and the letter of the Scriptures over to their side.'

One of the most active and gifted of the sect was the preacher Doctor Balthasar Hubmaier, a man remarkable for his knowledge of Scripture, who allowed each individual to have his own belief, as he made it out for himself in the Bible. In his 'eighteen articles relating to a wholly Christian life' Hubmaier, like Luther, lays down the principle that 'as each Christian believes and is baptised for himself, so too each one must judge for himself, from the Scriptures, whether he is getting proper meat and drink from the shepherd of souls.' He chose as the scene of his labours the town of Waldshut, situated on the Swiss frontier of the lordship of Hauenstein, and soon found large numbers there, among the common people and the guilds, who were of opinion that he, as a shepherd of souls, did supply 'the right meat and drink.' He gained such influence over the community that the authority of the town council was quite set at nought. Under his leadership everything connected with the established religion was done away with; all church decorations, altars, images, and pictures were torn down and broken to pieces, and the priests driven away. His followers boasted that Hubmaier had come by the 'ordinance and special sending of God,' and the new town council

did not consider itself to have received any indignity from the mayor of the town, Archduke Ferdinand, for they said 'he had only allowed God's Word to be preached.' The town council of Freiburg in the Breisgau wrote as follows on October 3, 1523, to the inhabitants of Waldshut: 'The fact of your alleging that you could not have acted otherwise than to allow the Word of God to be proclaimed will not bring you favour or goodwill with his Princely Highness, or indeed anywhere, when it is considered that your parson has widely misled you and has dared, without the sanction of any legitimate authority, to convert you to heretical Hussite opinions and lead you into all sorts of insubordination. Him have you followed and retained among you in spite of all commands and warnings. If you should, then, be of opinion that you have not done wrong in this, their Princely Highnesses and their obedient subjects might have cause to think that you hold them to be suppressors of the Word of God. Therefore desist from this, and leave off your speaking and writing; for you have no right in the matter. You may also consider this, that if our holy faith is to be so little valued that we are to give leave to every apostate, ejected monk or priest to interpret Holy Scripture after his own liking, and also to annul the conclusions and decrees of holy councils, we shall be obliged to take up with a new belief every day, and we shall not be able to say or declare that we have any settled Christian faith. Take this to heart, and stand by the ancient beliefs of the Christian Church.'[1]

This general disturbance in the department of religion was a sore trial to Luther.

[1] Schreiber, *Bauernkrieg* ('Peasants' War'), i. 100–101.

With a confidence and an assurance of victory that have never been equalled Luther had again and again declared that his gospel had come down to him from heaven, and that he would have it judged by no one, not even the angels; that his mouth was the mouth of Christ, and that whoever did not accept his teaching could not be saved. Now, on the contrary, he saw everywhere among those who, in pursuance of his example, had separated from the Church, fresh evangelists arising, with, each one, a fresh gospel. And these evangelists also, while fighting against him and his doctrines, declared themselves to be the recipients of an even higher mission from heaven. At the beginning of the year 1525 things had already come to such a pass that Luther was driven to say: 'This one will have no baptism; that one denies the Sacrament; another places a whole epoch between these days and the Day of Judgment. Some teach that Christ is not God; some say this, some say that, and there are almost as many sects and beliefs as there are men and women. There is no peasant, however lowly, but if he dreams or thinks anything, the Holy Ghost must have inspired it, and he is meant for a prophet!'[1]

The state of religious anarchy, which had now become prevalent over a large portion of the Empire, had for years been predicted by thoughtful observers as the natural result of the movement which had originated with Luther. Germany, they said, would become a second Bohemia; for Luther was now disseminating the same doctrines which John Huss had preached in Bohemia in the fifteenth century.

[1] Letter to the Christians at Antwerp at the beginning of 1525. See De Wette, iii. 61.

In the year 1519 Luther had declared that he had nothing in common with Huss, and that to all eternity he would never justify a schism; that the Hussites had acted ill in separating themselves from the unity of the Roman Chair. Soon after, however, he announced that he had come to recognise that he was a Hussite, and was teaching all that Huss had taught: Huss had preached the true Gospel, but it had been condemned by the Council at Costnitz, where the 'doctrines of the hellish dragon' had been set up in the place of the Gospel. After the example of Huss and the Hussites he rejected the authority of the Apostolic Chair, the authority of œcumenical councils, the whole hierarchical organisation of the Church, and many of its most vital fundamental dogmas. Like the Bohemian Brethren he declared the Holy Scriptures to be the sole fountain-head of the faith, and, like them also, he abolished the distinction between priests and laymen and taught the universal priesthood of all Christians, called the Pope the real Antichrist, and the whole established Church with its doctrines and institutions, its constitution, laws, privileges, and customs, an outgrowth of hell.[1]

All that had come to pass formerly in Bohemia as a result of this teaching, the terrible want of unity in religion, of which eye-witnesses at the beginning of the sixteenth century testify, would now, it was prophesied, happen in Germany also. Just as Luther had written of Germany in 1525, 'There are nowadays almost as many sects and creeds as there are heads,' so Bohuslav

[1] It was Wickliffe who first said that the Pope was Antichrist. He said repeatedly of him: '. . . homo peccati Antichristus insignis loquitur, quod sit summus Christi vicarius . . . .' See Lechler, i. 533-534, 601, note 3.

Hassenstein had written of Bohemia: 'Nobody is hindered from setting up a new religion. Not to mention the Wickliffites and Picards, there are also those who deny the divinity of our Saviour, those who maintain that the soul dies with the body, those who think every religion equally profitable to salvation, yea, verily, those who think that even hell is an invention of man. I pass over here innumerable opinions of this sort.' And these sectarians do not keep their opinions to themselves, but preach them openly. Old men and boys, young men and women dispute about matters of faith, and expound the Holy Scriptures, which all the while they have not studied. Each sect finds its adherents, so great is the craving after something new.'[1]

After obedience to the authority of the Church had died out, there was now in Germany, as then in Bohemia, no more hold on the thoughts and hearts of the people.

In Germany too as well as in Bohemia the whole fabric of social life was shattered by the preaching of Hussite doctrines.

[1] See Gindely, *History of the Bohemian Brothers* (Prague, 1857), i. 39–43, 102–103, 161, 490, and Gindely, 'On the Dogmatic Opinions of the Bohemian Brothers,' in the *Sitzungsberichten der Wiener Academie*, xiii. 349–413. See our statement, vol. i. (15th and 16th ed.), pp. 639–640 (Eng. trans. ii. 299, 300).

BOOK VII

CHAPTER I

INFLUENCE OF THE SOCIALISTIC PRINCIPLES OF THE HUSSITES—PRELUDE TO THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION

'It is to John Huss and his followers,' says a contemporary writer concerning the social revolution of the sixteenth century, 'that we must trace all those false theories about spiritual and temporal power, and the possession of worldly goods and privileges, which now in Germany, as formerly in Bohemia, have produced tumult, sedition, theft, pillage, and slaughter, and have shattered the foundations of the commonwealth. The poison of the false doctrines has long since been filtering out of Bohemia into Germany, and wherever it spreads it will work the same disastrous effects.'[1]

John Huss had called in question all spiritual and political power by his doctrine that no man who had committed a deadly sin could be a bishop, a prelate, or a temporal lord, because his temporal or spiritual rulership, his office and his dignity, would not be approved of by God. Judgment in such cases, he said, belonged to the 'community of believers.' Huss had further declared war on the whole organism of society by his assertion that 'all those who use and administer their property in opposition to the command

[1] 'Contra M. Lutherum et Lutheranismi fautores,' fol. 14.

of God have no right to this property,' and further 'the possession of any property by an unrighteous and godless person is robbery.' He applied these principles chiefly against the wealthy possessions of the ecclesiastical class, which, he said, being improperly used, ought of necessity to pass into the hands of the laity. The opulence of the clergy, he said, was the cause of the abject condition of the peasants and the impoverishment of the nobility, who in consequence of this impoverishment were driven to plunder, robbery, and oppression of their feudal subjects. All the Church lands, those also that had been acquired as gifts, must be returned to the hands of their former owners; they belonged by every right of justice to the secular lords whose forefathers, with ill-judged generosity, and to the ruin of souls, and contrary to all commands of Holy Scripture, had endowed the clergy with worldly goods. By such assertions as these Huss gained a large portion of the nobility to his side. But he also won over the common people by preaching that the goods of the clergy were the goods of the poor, by which the latter ought to be maintained, and that poverty was an evil only *tolerated* by God, and for which the wealthy classes were responsible. Only believers, he said, had any right to property.[1]

What condition of things was brought about by the attempt to carry out principles which were subversive of all the rights of proprietorship, and which

[1] See, in Zöllner's *Abhandlung zur Vorgeschichte des Bauernkrieges*, the section 'The Social Element in the Hussite Movement,' pp. 20–65. Huss took his opinions in great measure from the writings of Wickliffe, in whose 'evangelical commonwealth of the future' there was to be no private property, but everything was to be shared in common. . . . *Tunc necessitaretur respublica redire ad politiam evangelicam, habens omnia in communi.*

called out all the baser passions of the unpropertied classes, was direfully exhibited in the Hussite wars. Fire and flames raged over the whole of Bohemia during the years of war and revolution. Artisans and peasants, proletarians from towns and provinces, mustered in large armies and sang exultingly that at length the heaven-sent day of vengeance had come, that the battle of the chosen people of God against the Philistines was about to be renewed. 'Cursed be every believer,' thus rang the Jacobite war-cry, 'who holds back his sword from the blood of the enemies of Christ; rather should he bathe and sanctify his hands in that blood.' In a declaration of war in the year 1423, Ziska and his followers declared that they would 'persecute, scourge, slay, behead, hang, drown, and burn all godless people, and visit with every kind of vengeance that overtakes the wicked, according to God's command, each single person without exception, and without distinction of class or sex.'[1] Some of the nobles, who hoped for personal gain in the distribution of Church property, now offered themselves as leaders of regiments. 'We must aim at stirring up the burgesses to fight for their new faith against the king,' said some of the barons who were propagating Hussite doctrines among the people. 'Then, let things go as they will, we are bound to be the gainers, and to get a share of the property either of the clergy or of the burghers. If the king agrees to secularisation, the nobility will be the chief gainers. If he does not agree to it, then there will be a civil war, which will afford

[1] See von Bezold, *Zur Geschichte des Husitenthums*, x. 17–19; also Brezowa bei von Höfler, *Geschichtschreiber der husitischen Bewegung* ('Historian of the Hussite Movement'), i. 388; Lechler, i. 471.

each one an opportunity for neatly rounding off his territory.'[1]

A century later Sickingen and Hutten pursued similar tactics in Germany.

In the service of God, as they put it, innumerable cloisters were plundered and destroyed by the 'holy troops' of the Hussites; libraries, archives, works of art of all sorts were reduced to ashes; monks and priests were killed.

'Before this happened,' says Sigmund Meisterlin in his chronicle the 'Behaimlant,'[2] 'churches and houses of God stood up towards heaven, with broad, high, deep arches that were wonderful to see, and altars set up so high you would not have believed, and they were filled with holy relics, and gold and silver, and priestly vestments inwrought with pearls and precious stones; and all the ornaments of the temple were costly, and the windows high and light and made with costly glass-work and skilful craftmanship.' 'But the gold and the silver that were in the churches and in the possession of the priests, and the relics and the chalices, and so forth, make the people of Gomorrah desire to make a sack of it all. And so, great, mighty cloisters and abbeys and venerable churches were broken open, and what was in them everybody was suffered to take who liked; all priestly things were done away with, and the land of *Behaim* was filled with more martyrs than were ever before in any land, so many were murdered for the Christian faith. Such monstrous cruelty and persecution did the devilish people carry on.'[3]

In cruelty and rapacity the women showed them-

[1] Andreas von Brod; see von Höfler, ii. 347.

[2] Bohemian land. [3] *Chronicles of the German Cities*, iii. 176–177.

selves worst of all: in the town of Komotau nearly all the male inhabitants met their death by fire and sword. Everywhere the property of the 'unbelievers' was made over to the hands of the 'believers.' In the midst of their frantic raging they boasted of their 'mercifulness' towards the 'destroyers of the faith, the oppressors of innocence, and other stiff-necked and criminal violators of divine laws.' [1]

In a memorial sent up to the town council of Prague, one party of the Hussites wrote out twelve articles, by which, among other things, they asked for the 'abolition of all rights which did not coincide with the laws of God.' The abolition of all social privileges was to be the first step towards the enfranchisement of the peasants in 'water, forest, and grass-lands.' In the administration of justice everything was to be regulated according to divine right. All taxes and burdens, all distinctions of classes, all conditions of dependence were to come to an end. 'All were to dwell together as brothers, and none was to be subject to another.' Other parties insisted on the introduction of thoroughgoing communism. 'Everything was to be in common; nobody was to own individual property; whoever did, committed a deadly sin.' 'The sons of God will tread under foot the necks of kings, and all the kingdoms under heaven will be given unto them.' All dominion must belong to the people and to the elect of God; all cities, villages, and fortresses must be plundered and burnt with fire.[2]

'The nation and the country went altogether to

[1] See Zöllner, pp. 39–48.

[2] See von Höfler, *Geschichtschreiber*, i. 335 and ii. 435, and Lechler, ii. 471–472; von Bezold, *Zur Geschichte des Husitenthums*, pp. 43–45, 50.

pieces in Bohemia during the long and direful years of war. The once flourishing kingdom became a desolation of abomination.' The burgher class took up arms; a tremendous proletariate class grew up; the peasants sank into the most abject state of bondage. The most dazzling promises had been held out to this last class, in order to induce them to arm. The removal of all taxation by spiritual and temporal rulers, equal rights in water, forest, and grasslands, even a share in the property of the priests, the king, and the nobles were promised them, and the befooled peasants became the most daring 'warriors of God' among the Taborites. But their pretended liberators soon appeared in the light of tyrants and oppressors, and treated them as infamous slaves.[1]

The results of the Hussite wars were, on religious ground, the paltry and tyrannical utraquistical State Church; on social and political ground, the ruin of prosperity, and the subjection of the nation by an overbearing oligarchy.

'The once delightful kingdom of Bohemia has become a spectacle and a by-word for all nations,' said the utraquist Magister Laurentius von Brezowa at sight of the unutterable misery in the land. 'The whole world,' a Catholic Czech lamented, 'makes a mock of Bohemia.' Not until it was too late was it recognised how true was the judgment passed by the Paris University on the teaching of the Bohemian 'reformer:' 'It is a corrupting heresy, provocative

[1] For fuller details see von Bezold, pp. 55–63 and 75, 94. 'The country people, instead of bettering their condition, had sunk to a state which reminds us of the melancholy period of the Thirty Years' War, and which completely shackled the power of resistance of the peasants against future oppression. . . .'

of scandal, disobedience, sedition, and tumult, and which will finally bring on itself the curse of Ham.' The Cardinal Legate Branda had spoken as apprehensively in 1524: in the battle against the Hussites, he had said, it was a question not merely of the choice of a faith and a Church, but of the preservation of human society.[1] 'A large portion of the heretics,' he writes, 'insist that all things must be in common, and that no interest, tribute money, or obedience ought to be rendered to the ruling authorities; through principles such as these human culture will be ruined and the whole scientific and artistic development of mankind will be arrested.' 'They are endeavouring to set aside all rights, human and divine, by violence, and it will soon come to this, that neither kings and princes in their kingdoms and principalities, nor burghers in their cities, nor private individuals in their own houses, will any more be safe. This abominable heresy not only persecutes the faith and the Church, but under the leadership of the Devil makes war on the whole of humanity, whose rights it assails and annihilates.'[2]

The international significance of Hussite radicalism soon made itself felt in Germany also with terrible emphasis. 'Everywhere the Bohemians were dreaded,' says the so-called 'Klingenberg Chronicle,' 'and all pious people were incensed because rascality and crime were getting the upper hand in other countries also and trampling down the pious, the righteous, and the

[1] *Conservatio societatis humanae.*

[2] See von Bezold, pp. 51–53. The Council of Constance wrote in 1416 concerning the dangerous political consequences of the teaching of John Huss: 'Metuendum est, ne eveniat irrecuperabilis jactura, qua *una cum recta fide et ipsum regnum periclitetur*, et cum spiritualibus temporalia una parili ruina involvantur.'

wealthy. For it was a rare opportunity for poor, luxurious people, who would not work and yet were haughty, luxurious, and independent; for there were many people found in all countries who were coarse and ignorant, and who encouraged the Bohemians in their heresy and unbelief wherever they could; and when they did not dare to do this openly they did it secretly, for they could not help fearing the pious and righteous persons. Thus the Bohemians had many ignorant people for their secret patrons. And as in those days there was strong opposition to the priests, and the common people liked to hear them abused, the priests became a by-word in the land, and it was a stock saying "that everybody ought to share their possessions."'[1]

The Hussites early obtained a considerable following in Austria, Bavaria, Franconia, Silesia, and Saxony, and even in the Prussian territory German adventurers, wild *Landsknechts*, and bandit robbers had served as soldiers in the Hussite army, and afterwards spread the Bohemian poison at home. Above all, those 'beggars and rascals' the Bohemian warrior brotherhoods, who in the second half of the fifteenth century found employment in almost all the wars that were being waged, and who robbed and murdered in the character of protectors of divine laws, were zealous advocates of the Hussite socialistic principles among the unpropertied classes in town and country.[2]

The first rising of the peasants took place in the year 1431, in the neighbourhood of Worms, where a short time before the Saxon ecclesiastic, John Drändorf,

[1] The *Klingenberg Chronicle*, edited by Henne von Sargans (1861), p. 198. See also von Bezold, *Die armen Leute*, pp. 16 17.

[2] See Zöllner, pp. 72–75; Lechler, ii. 485–489; Boehm, pp. 106–112.

had expiated his Hussite teaching at the stake.[1] Nearly 3,000 peasants, equipped with spears, cross-bows, and complete suits of armour, and carrying a banner, stationed themselves outside Worms and demanded that the Jews, by whose usury they were oppressed, should be delivered over to them. The movement bore an essentially communistic and socialist stamp, and it spread to such an alarming extent that, at a town diet at Ulms, the Worms delegates expressed the fear that the Empire and Christianity would be 'more harassed and distressed by the peasants than by the Hussites.'[2]

The peasants had learnt from the leagues of the princes and nobles, the knights and the cities, that 'we must unite together in bands, and make our own covenant and have our own banner, so that it may be known what class we belong to and what we want to gain by the confederacy.' For their banner the peasants soon chose the *Bundschuh*,[3] which they stuck up on poles, or painted on flags, as a sign. Peasant insurrections after this went by the name of *Bundschuhs*.

These insurgents, like the Taborites in Bohemia, were led by members of the nobility—mostly impoverished, luckless persons who hoped for improvement of their circumstances by means of a revolution. Not infrequently it was these unfortunate individuals who themselves stirred up the peasants. Thus, for instance, in the year 1486 the noble, Anselm von

[1] See Krummel, *Theological Studies and Criticisms*, 42[b], 133–144, and Haupt, *Hussite Propaganda*, p. 244 ff.

[2] For fuller details see von Bezold, *The Rhenish Peasant Insurrection*, pp. 129–149, and Haupt, p. 264 ff.

[3] A shoe belonging specially to their class, which they laced on, from the ankles upwards, with leather thongs.

Massmünster, in Alsace, raised a banner with a *Bundschuh*, made one of his esquires his lieutenant-general, and in a short time mustered nearly 2,000 peasants. The oath they swore was 'enmity to all the world.'

'How much will be gained when the *Bundschuh* is set up,' said a peasant once to the abbot Trithemius, 'fortune must prove; but at least we intend to be free, like the Swiss, and to share in the government of ecclesiastical matters, like the Hussites.'

This was the result aimed at by a peasant insurrection in Carinthia and in the Styrian Ennsthal in 1478. The insurgents wanted all the nobility to be put down and the priesthood itself to be under their control; they meant also to assume the right of appointing and deposing the clergy according to their own will and pleasure.

The claims which Hans Böhm, the bagpiper of Niclashausen, in the Taubergrund, set up in 1476 went much further still. He was the first apostle of socialism on German soil who advocated a return to the state of nature.

This 'holy youngster' of Niclashausen preached, by right of a 'high and heavenly call,' to immense crowds that he was going to make the people glad with the proclamation of the pure Word of God. The kingdom of God was at hand; it would henceforth be neither Pope's nor Emperor's, neither a spiritual nor a temporal government; also, every distinction of classes would cease; brotherly equality would reign among all mankind. 'The princes, spiritual and secular, also the counts and the knights, are so rich; if all they have were shared by the community we should all have enough,

and this must come to pass; forest, water, meadows, and waste lands must be free for the unlimited use of all; it would come even to this, that princes and lords would have to work for daily wages. The time also was at hand when all priests would be put to death; whoever could kill thirty priests would earn a great reward.'

Fraternal equality, freedom from all oppression and from every higher authority seemed indeed to the common people the true Gospel, and any one who proclaimed it a 'man of God' taking pity on the people. 'And so the foolish populace was soon up,' writes Sebastian Brant, 'and flocked from all quarters round this kettle-drumming saint.' The 'holy youngster' was joined by such strong reinforcements from Bavaria, Suabia, Alsace, from the Rheingau and the Wetterau, from Hesse, Saxony, and Meissen, that nearly 30,000 men encamped in the little village and its neighbourhood. 'The journeymen artisans,' says the chronicler Conrad Stolle, 'fled from their workshops, the peasants from their ploughs, the haymakers with their sickles, all without leave from their masters and employers, and enlisted in the clothes they had on when the frenzy had seized them. Very few of them had any food, but those whose service they entered supplied them with meat and drink, and the salutation among them was no other than "Brother" and "Sister." The fanatics marched with flags and banners floating before them, and sang songs which had been inspired by the self-same spirit of heresy and fraud.'

When one day the bagpiper called upon the crowds, gathered together in thousands, to assemble again on an appointed day, bringing arms with them, but

leaving their wives and children behind, he was led off captive to Würzburg. 'When Hans Böhm was taken prisoner,' Stolle relates, 'he was sitting naked in a tavern, preaching.' A company of some 10,000 of the 'Faithful' marched to his rescue at Würzburg, under the leadership of four noblemen, vassals of the Archbishop.

Hans Böhm was merely the tool of a party of agitators led by a Hussite, who lived in a cavern near Niclashausen, by the pastor of the village, and by a renegade monk. 'Young noblemen also,' he said in prison, 'had instructed and prompted him.' The knight Cunz von Thunfeld confessed that he had helped the Bishop of Würzburg, his liege lord, 'to stir up considerable tumult and sedition.'[1] Even Count Johann von Wertheim came under suspicion of being a promoter of the movement.[2]

The rising was quelled, but the bagpiper's lessons were not forgotten. They were spread about by the home-returning masses, especially in the Suabian-Allemanic district of Germany.

Among the writings which served to promote revolutionary and socialistic ideas the so-called 'Reformation Kaiser Sigmund's' stands foremost. This 'Reformation,' written in 1438 by a revolutionary German secular cleric, appeared first in print in the year 1476, the same year in which the bagpiper had figured, and was reprinted successively in 1480, 1484, 1490, 1497.[3]

[1] Barack, p. 101.

[2] Stolle, p. 134. Compare Barack, pp. 85–97.

[3] Concerning these different editions see Boehm, pp. 6–18. The *Reformation Kaiser Sigmund's* is the first revolutionary pamphlet in the German language. If a Tschechish Rhine chronicle of the fourteenth century has been called 'the trumpet of the Hussite war,' our

'Obedience is a thing of the past,' so the pamphlet begins; 'justice is at its last gasp; nothing is as it should be; therefore God is withdrawing his grace from us, and rightly so.' 'The ecclesiastical and secular rulers neglect all that God has commanded them.' 'Therefore a new order of things must be instituted, and to this work the "small ones" of the earth are called.' 'None set themselves against divine ordinances except the learned, the wise, and the powerful, but the "small ones" call out and cry to God for help and for a good government.' 'Ecclesiastical government is sick unto death; the Empire and all that belongs to it is given over to injustice; it must be broken up by force; if the great ones sleep the small ones must wake up, that things may be set right.' 'The humble shall be exalted and the proud shall be abased, as Christ himself said in the Gospel and the prophets in their writings.'[1]

Freedom and equality must be installed on earth by means of the humble people. 'It is an unheard-of thing that we should have to proclaim in holy Christendom that so great a wrong prevails, that men are so hardened before God that one should dare to say to another: "You are my own property." For consider how our Lord Christ willingly endured so great suffering with his death and his wounds for our sakes, and freed us from all bonds, so that henceforth none must be exalted above the others. For we all stand in the like state of redemption and freedom, whether we be

'*Reformation*' may well be called a 'trumpet of the Peasants' War,' for the history of its manuscript and printed copies shows plainly that it was not till long after it was first composed that it became widely known and influential, and that it was precisely in the second decade of the sixteenth century that it gained full appreciation.

[1] Boehm, pp. 161, 170, 225, 237.

nobles or commoners, rich or poor, great or small. All and any who are baptised and believe are counted as members of Christ Jesus. Therefore be it known unto every one, whoever it may be, who calls his fellow-Christian his own property, that he is not a Christian and is in opposition to Christ and all the commandments of God.' If any of the nobles refuse to desist from this habit, they must be put to death; if a cloister refuses, it must be utterly destroyed: this is godly work. 'It must not be borne any longer either from the clergy or the laity.'

But the freedom of Christians required also that all restraints, bans, and other oppressive measures, should cease. The peasant folk were shut out from the use of the forests; 'they are taxed; their pastures are taken from them; there is nowhere any mercy shown them. Their rulers take fines from them, and yet they live on their labour. The beasts of the forest, the birds of the air, feed upon the husbandman. Let them know that they shall not put woods or fields under interdict.' 'Item, they put the rivers under ban, which must have their course and which are for the service of all countries.' 'It has, alas! come to this, that they would put restrictions on the whole universe if they could. Even the brute beasts, without any reason, might almost cry out to us: Faithful and pious Christians, after all the exhortations herewith given, let all this great injustice sink into your hearts; verily it is time for it, ere God revenge Himself heavily.'

In the towns as well as in the country, the pamphlet went on, the small man was oppressed. The abuses of forestalling and of trading associations must be abolished, likewise the guilds. 'Otherwise,' so says

some one, 'I shall be overcharged: everything in the town is overcharged, and the gentry and country folk are therefore incensed against the towns. If everything in the towns were common property, then gentry and everybody would share and share alike.' Each person must only carry on his own handiwork and trade, and not have a second one; the prices of food and the wages of artisans and day labourers must be fixed by official representatives sworn in for the purpose.[1]

With regard to ecclesiastical matters the spiritual and the temporal must always be kept separate. To this end, among other things, the Church estates must be retrenched, and a fixed yearly income be established for all persons of the clerical class. Thus, for instance, a pastor 'shall have the yearly sum of eighty Rhenish guldens for his whole income, and shall have nothing to do with interest and tithes. No clerical personage is to have more than one benefice, be he high or low.'

'If any one is disobedient to this new ordinance, be it a clerical or a lay person, he shall be outlawed, and his goods free to be seized and taken from him by any and every one. For the disobedient are of no use to God.' Disobedient ecclesiastics, whether they be bishops, 'doctors,' or priests, must forfeit all their offices and be deprived of all their benefices. 'When it is cloisters that are refractory they must be destroyed out and out.' 'For God will have true obedience from his people, and whoever destroys unrighteous goods does God great service.'

In order to bring in this new *régime* they must strike lustily and use the sword. 'God does not

[1] Boehm, pp. 221–228, 216–220, 235.

forsake his own. Nobody need be afraid. All goes easily with God's help and strength, if only they will be true to Him and have regard to his righteousness.'

'If then the world in general recognises our liberty, the powerful chiefs will be robbed of their might. For say who would rather be some one else's property than be free? Christ Jesus out of fatherly wisdom has bestowed this freedom on mankind.' 'Eternal life lies before us; whoso then will not be admonished, he cannot rightly be called a Christian; let that one know certainly that hell is open unto him. Therefore, free and noble Christians, act, we beseech you, in such a manner that we may come joyfully to eternal rest.'[1]

Constant risings of the common people, followed by results of varying significance, went on during the last decades of the fifteenth century. Thus, for instance, in 1486 there was a 'Bavarian sedition,' brought about by the preaching of one Meister Matheis Korsang of Augsburg.[2] In the years 1491 and 1492 the congregation of the abbey of Kempten revolted against the oppression it had suffered, and raised a *Bundschuh* under the leadership of Jörg Hug of Unterasried.

In the year 1493 the vassals of the Bishop of Strasburg assembled at night-time at their secret meeting-place, the Hungerberg, north-west of Schlettstadt, between Andlau and Villé, and formed themselves into a confederacy. This *Bundschuh* numbered also many adherents in the Alsatian towns, 'many ruined people who bound themselves by oath to carry on secret manœuvres.' Among other articles in the covenant it was laid down that the people were not to pay any

[1] Boehm, pp. 169, 206, 247.

[2] Haggenmüller, *History of Kempten*, i. 408.

more taxes except at their own will and pleasure, and that each community was to govern itself. All Jews were to be plundered and extirpated; all ecclesiastics to be restricted to one benefice apiece; all debts were to be rescinded by the institution of a jubilee year, and all taxes and other burdens to be removed. The schemes were betrayed, however, the agents, as far as they could be got hold of, punished, and two of the ringleaders were hung and quartered at Basle.[1]

But the *Bundschuh*, as had been predicted before its commencement, had widespread consequences. 'It was easy to see in these seditious risings how the Bohemian poison, scattered broadcast among the common people, had grown up disastrously, and filled all kingdoms and all rich people with fear and terror; for it was clear that the people thought nothing of overthrowing all rule and government, and that they would no longer pay taxes or interest, but intended to be quite free and equal the one with the other.'

The covenant of another *Bundschuh* started in 1502 at Untergrombach, in the bishopric of Spires, ran as follows: 'In order that we may become free we have banded ourselves together, and we will fight with arms and swords, because we mean to be like the Swiss.' 'We will abolish and exterminate all country magistrates and rulers, and we will march against them with a strong army and with weapons in our hands; and all who do not show us favour, and swear to our covenant, shall be put to death.' 'When the princes and nobles have been smashed up, we shall march upon the prebendaries, the bishops, and the abbots, and we will over-

[1] Berler Chronicle in the *Code Histor. de la Ville de Strasbourg*, i. 104. Compare Zimmermann, i. 141–145.

power them and drive them out or kill them, together with all the priests and monks.' In the name of divine justice every earthly government was to be done away with; all interest and tithes, rents, and taxes were to be abrogated; 'water, forest, pasture and heath, wild game, birds, deer, and fish to be free and open to every one.' Before long this *Bundschuh* numbered 7,000 men, besides whom nearly 400 women had been won over to the cause of freedom. The plan was to assemble on St. George's Day in an armed concourse before the walls of Bruchsals. But this conspiracy also was betrayed before the day of action, and all who had joined it of their own free will, and who could be caught, died by the hands of the hangman. Many of the accomplices fled into Switzerland, the Black Forest, the Breisgau, and the Duchy of Würtemberg.

Among these fugitives was one of the real founders of the league, Jost Fritz, an 'out-and-out leader and seducer of the people, who decoyed them with honeyed words, knowing well where the shoe pinched the poor man, and where he himself had been too heavily oppressed by Jews and other usurers, by lawyers and vampires, by princes, nobles, and ecclesiastical lords.' Jost Fritz had served as a *Landsknecht* in battles and campaigns, and he played his part with all the importance of a regular soldier. He devoted himself for years in the Black Forest, in the See, and in the Breisgau to stirring up the poor peasants and all and any who had set their hearts on much wages and little work. Like the bagpiper of Niclashausen he inveighed against the prevailing crimes, which, he said, were not properly punished by the magistrates, and against the oppression of the poor by their rulers.

'He spoke so enticingly that every one thought from that very hour to grow happy and rich.' Only the Pope and the Emperor, he said, were the powers ordained by God; all other lords and rulers must be put down, and all unjust taxes and duties. Water, forest, and pastures were for the poor as well as the rich. They must make a stand against the great usurers, and must recover, and keep, all ancient rights, usages, and customs of which they had been defrauded. Perpetual feuds were the ruin of the nation; therefore a lasting peace must be established throughout Christendom, and no man or woman must be tolerated among the living who attempted to oppose this. Whoever was ready to fight, to him should money be given, and he should be sent against the Turks and the unbelievers. When the *Bundschuh* was set up and the crowds mustered, they should inform the Emperor of the proceedings and call on him to put himself at the head of the league. All these intentions, so Jost Fritz informed the peasants convoked together at nocturnal meetings, were 'godly, fitting, and just;' they did not mean to do anything but what was in conformity with Holy Scripture and was just and right in itself.

The league was strongly supported by all the paupers and malcontents in the Breisgau, in Alsace, and in Suabia; an impoverished nobleman was also won over to it. Several priests, even, were mixed up in the affair, and the pastor of the village of Lehen, near Freiburg, which was the centre of the movement, pronounced the undertaking to be a 'godly thing, required by justice.' Professional beggars and vagrants, hawkers, musicians, and innkeepers were employed as negotiators and assistants; and were instructed to set light to

fires in different places at the hour appointed for breaking loose. Help from the Swiss was confidently hoped for.

By the month of October 1513 'all the threads were spun' in the different districts, and the confederates were in a position to make themselves masters of Freiburg, when the conspiracy was suddenly discovered, and forcibly suppressed, by the burghers of the threatened city and by the Margrave Philip.[1]

Insurrections of the lower classes occurred simultaneously also in Switzerland, in the cantons of Lucerne, Solothurn, and Bern. But the most dangerous of all was the rising which broke out in the year 1514 in Würtemberg under the name of 'Poor Conrad.'[2] This insurrection was in connection with the *Bundschuh* at Lehen; but while the latter was almost exclusively confined to the proletariate classes of the towns and provinces—so much so that it cost much trouble even to collect money for the flag—the 'Poor Conrad league' was taken up by well to do citizens and peasants. The next stimulus to sedition was given by the tyranny of Duke Ulrich, an overbearing despot, who consumed the very marrow of the land, overburdened the people with taxes, and by luxury and extravagance had contracted debts to the amount of nearly a million gulden. Without the concurrence of the provincial deputies, Ulrich exacted a yearly property tax of one penny upon every gulden of capital; and in the same

[1] For fuller details see H. Schreiber, *Der Bundschuh zu Lehen und der arme Conrad zu Bühl* (Freiburg, 1824).

[2] As 'rich Cunz' (or rich Conrad) is a saying nowadays, so was the opposite formerly—'poor Cunz,' 'poor Conrad.' Ringleaders of the insurgents adopted this name in defiance. Later on the whole insurgent populace went by the name of 'Poor Conrad.' See von Stätin, iv. 99, note 3.

arbitrary manner he decreed that all butchers, millers, bakers, and wine dealers were to sell reduced weight and measure at the old prices, and pay him a tax out of the profit that thus accrued to them. Town people and peasants banded together to resist the overwhelming tyranny of the Duke and his shameless favourites and officials. A cutler in the town of Schorndorf set up an office, or chancellery, from which proclamations were issued over the whole country.

In Markgröningen, even the town pastor preached to the tune of 'Poor Conrad'[1] and incited his congregation to revolt. Their first stipulation was that the innovations introduced by Duke Ulrich should be put a stop to, and then they went on to demand freedom of the chase, of fishing, and of felling wood, and immunity from all taxes and bond service. In the towns the great aim was to put down the 'civic magnates,'[2] in the country to get rid of the lords of manors. Numbers of people were in terror lest slavery should be introduced, and were only too ready to join forces with the champions of 'divine right and justice.'

Many of the agitators acknowledged that they had intended to lay violent hands on the possessions of the Duke, the monks, priests, and nobles, and to put to death any of them who proved refractory. During the insurrection the cry was continually heard: 'The rich must share with us; we mean to stab to death all the great "heads," so that their entrails shall be spilt on the ground. Now we have swords in our hands; now the

[1] For an account of 'Poor Conrad' see von Stätin, iv. 95–116; Muck, *Heilsbronn*, i. 213–214.

[2] The *Ehrbarkeiten*, i.e. the wealthier and more powerful burghers in the town.

sun is in our horizon.' The sedition was suppressed, but the fire went on smouldering under the ashes.

In the autumn of 1517 a gigantic conspiracy was discovered in the margraviate of Baden: the whole country between the Vosges and the Black Forest swarmed with its accomplices. A *Bundschuh*, discovered at the same time in the district of Weissenburg, had had for its object to surprise the towns of Weissenburg and Hagenau, and to threaten the nobles and the knights. Rents and taxes were to be abolished, and also all courts of justice, and all rulers, with the exception of the Emperor. No taxes were to be paid any longer except to the Emperor and the Church.[1]

[1] See Birck, i. 105–106.

CHAPTER II

GENERAL CAUSES OF THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION

THE frequent insurrections of the peasants throughout the fifteenth century and at the beginning of the sixteenth show plainly that the great social revolution of 1525, which convulsed almost every corner of the Empire from the Alps to the Baltic, was not first occasioned by the preaching and the writings of the German religious reformers.

Had Luther and his followers never appeared on the scene, the spirit of discontent and insubordination, which had gained ground everywhere among the common people, would still have produced fresh tumult and sedition in the towns and provinces. But it was the special condition of things brought about—or rather developed—by the religious disturbances, which gave this revolution its characteristics of universality and inhuman atrocity.[1]

[1] Maurenbrecher (*Katholische Reformation*, i. 257) says frankly: 'It is not true historical criticism, but a mere apologetic argument, based on false observation, which aims at disproving the fact that Luther's evangelical preaching enormously augmented and ripened to its crisis the social agitation which had been going on in the lower strata of the nation from the beginning of the fifteenth century.

Riezler (*Sitzungsberichte der Münchener Academie, Histor. Classe*, 1891, p. 708) adduces as a principal reason why Bavaria was exempted from the peasant war the strenuous resistance which the Bavarian Government opposed to the religious innovators. 'In consequence of the enforcement there of the religious edicts there was an absence in Bavaria

After the first outbreaks of these disturbances the German people, following the example set in Bohemia a century earlier, kept up a systematic process of undermining all traditional Church authority, to the dire prejudice of all orderly government. Libels and lampoons of the most virulent description, appealing to all the worst instincts of mankind, and exalting liberty and individualism at the expense of all discipline and morality, were published against spiritual and temporal rulers, and scattered broadcast over the land, while the work of inflaming the populace by religious preaching was developed into a regular trade. The stormers and ranters who, in Christian phraseology and with lavish use of Biblical texts, proclaimed the gospel of hatred and envy, gathered round them, year after year, a larger concourse of the frenzied masses.

When once it had become a settled fact that for centuries past the nation had been purposely misled and preyed upon by its spiritual rulers, it was but a slight step further to discovering that the whole fabric of secular government also, closely bound up as it then was with spiritual rule, was contrived for the sole pur-

of those inflammatory elements which elsewhere incited preachers and demagogues to clamour, in the same breath, for religious and for social freedom, and which added fuel to the fire in other parts of the Empire. But even in the districts where the apostles of the "new gospel" confined themselves to religion, they prepared the way for the rising of the peasants by awakening the spirit of liberty and inculcating contempt for existing authorities. It is time that controversy should cease around a fact, the intrinsic verisimilitude of which is backed up by overpowering evidence, and which if rightly appreciated leaves the Protestant cause no peg to hang on. There was much truth in the words of Cochlaeus to Luther: "Had all the princes driven your books, disciples, and adherents out of their lands, as did the most laudable Prince of Bavaria, your peasants would have remained just as quiet as the peasants of Bavaria." (See also Döllinger, *Beiträge*, ii. 492.)

pose of fleecing the lower orders, and that Divine justice demanded its complete overthrow.

The whole of the Christian past must be broken with. Historical rights and institutions must be as little regarded in political as in social departments; systematically organised conspiracies must aim by bloodshed and destruction at turning everything upside down, and bestowing earthly goods and earthly power on those who had hitherto been the lowliest and had possessed nothing. It needed no astrological sooth-sayers to foresee what Sebastian Brant predicted to the Germans in his poem:—

Such hurlyburly there will be,
Such fearful happenings you'll see,
As though the creation's end had come—
God help our holy Christendom!

Oh, be advised, ye priests, lest ye
Be all uprooted utterly. . .
May God look on us with his grace!
The Roman Empire strides apace
And German glory will efface.
But let God send us what he may,
His help will be sufficient stay.

Great changes we shall sure behold
In high and low, in young and old.

The growing taste for luxury and pleasure,[1] and the spread of intemperance, had become 'the corroding poison in town and country, among nobles and commoners, artisans and peasants.' 'It is seemly and becoming,' said the notables assembled at Nuremberg in 1524, repeating the utterances of former Diets, 'that each individual, according to his station and class, should secure the respect of strangers by suitable and distinctive dress. Nowadays, however, complete want

[1] *Glos und Comment uff* 80 *Artickln*, Bl. C.

of sense is shown in this matter, for it often happens that people of mean birth wear more costly clothes and jewels than those of much higher rank. In the days of our parents such extravagance was unknown in the German Empire; it has only come into fashion of late years.' The evil increased year by year; clothes not only became ruinously expensive, but 'they were renewed and altered almost every year;' and 'extravagant costliness in food and drink' also became the fashion. All this brought on the country 'murderous evil and corruption.' 'Electors and princes ought to put a stop to this extravagance in dress and jewellery among the nobility and the ladies at their courts, and they ought also to hold counsel on the matter with their feudal and lower nobility. With regard to the burghers, artisans, and peasants, new sumptuary dress laws must be made, and, in order to secure their being carried out, each individual should have the right to bring an action against any transgressor, at the tribunal of his or her district, and the unlawful clothing worn by the offender should become the property of the accuser. There was no hope otherwise of rooting out this daily increasing evil.' Side by side with this extravagance in dressing, eating, and drinking, unbridled license in blasphemy, cursing, and swearing was also gaining ground among the people; the evil-doers ought to be punished by the magistrates, either by capital punishment or by amputation of limbs. In order to make a stand against drunkenness it must be decreed that transgressors against the above laws found in a state of intoxication would be punished more severely than others. The committee of notables appointed to draw up these sumptuary laws remarked with justice that

reform could only be carried out among the members of the body politic if the 'heads' set them a good example in retrenching.

But it was precisely from the heads, spiritual as well as secular, that the evil proceeded.

'We hear that the princes and lords and knights'—so writes the author of the 'Complaint of a Simple Cloister Brother'[1]—'at the Diets and other assemblies, and at their own courts, seek to outdo one another in extravagantly costly clothing, in velvet, silk, damask, pearls, and ostrich feathers, and in sumptuous banquets, not to speak of low vices and immoderate gamblings.' The passion for gambling was reckoned 'the special delight and honour of great lords,' and gambling debts were common among them all. Thus, for instance, Albrecht of Brandenburg, Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, gambled away at the Nuremberg Diet 600 gold gulden—an enormous sum considering the then value of money—and the gambling debts of the Margrave Casimir of Brandenburg amounted to nearly 50,000 gulden.[2] Wealthy merchants and great business undertakers did not lag behind the princes; on the contrary, they went even to greater lengths in ostentatious extravagance. It was said of the son and son-in-law of the Augsburg banker Hochstetter that they had spent in one night on a banquet five or ten thousand gulden, and had gambled away at one stroke as much as 30,000 gulden.[3]

The lower classes took the upper ones as their models. 'Artisans and peasants, men-servants and

[1] *Clag eines einfeltig Klosterbruders*, Bl. F.

[2] Voigt, *Preuss. Geschichte*, ix. 748 ; Droysen, *Preuss. Politik*, ii. 456.

[3] See Greiff, *Tagebuch* (Day-book) *des Lucaspem*, pp. 95-96.

maid-servants spend their money on costly clothes and trinkets, and strut about like noble lords and ladies; and what they have left over they pour down their throats in public-houses; the young peasants especially surfeit themselves with dress and drink, and this evil grows worse every year, so that the punishment of God cannot fail to come.'[1]

Peasants and their wives dressed in velvet and silk, like the country squires and their wives, wore gold chains, and often outdid the nobles in '*vil Zehrungen, vil Schleck, vil Spiel.*'[2] 'The rich peasants wanted to show off before the nobles, and let them see that they had the most money;' and they 'cared no more for any nobleman, and would have nothing more to do with service and taxes.' The more the nobility were impoverished the higher rose the self-esteem and presumption of the well-to-do peasants. 'When there was a wedding, or a christening, or a fair in the village, there was often more fine dressing and costly eating and drinking among the villagers than at the castles, where the impoverished noblemen lived sparely. Indeed, the latter often sold or mortgaged one bit of land after another in order to provide costly entertainment on necessary occasions, or to buy fine clothes and jewels for their wives and daughters.' 'I know peasants,' wrote Wimpheling, 'who make so much display at the weddings of their sons and daughters, or the christenings of their children, that a house and an acre of land, with a little vineyard in addition, might be bought for the money spent.' Gluttony and drunkenness plunged many of the peasant class into debts from which they

[1] *Clag eines einfeltig Klosterbruders.*

[2] 'Much spending, much daintiness, much gambling.'

could never recover. Thomas Murner had already said in his 'Narrenbeschwörung:'—

They sit in the alehouse day and night,
And leave their work quite out of sight;
They squander and they drink away
More than their ploughs will e'er repay!
He who believeth not my tale,
Let him go see in the house of ale
The notice on the wall, 'The beer
Is given all on credit here;'
And thus right soon their corn is sold
Before it's even pierced the mould.

'Tippling, guzzling, and abusing all authorities, spiritual and secular,' writes another satirist, 'is nowadays the mark of a right-minded peasant youth, whose habit is to talk in this way:—

'In costly clothes I must be clad,
Then I shall be a noble lad;
Must drink as much as I can swill;
Must curse, swear, lie with right good will;
Must strut with pride about the town,
Must gamble and throw great stakes down,
For this is how to win renown.
And I must wrangle much about
The "Faith," and Gospel teaching shout,
Must loud revile the priests and pope
While in the public-house I tope.'[1]

'In taverns and bathing-houses everything is now discussed by the common people. They sit swilling and gorging and gambling, and want to settle the affairs of the nation. Farmers, tailors, shoemakers—in short, the meanest artisans or journeymen—are the best judges of which faith should be fought for. Each of

[1] The copy of the *Lucubrationes Theologicae* in the Franciscan Library at Fulda has three pages added to it, in a manuscript of the sixteenth century, which contain the above passages, and also other verses of the 'village priests,' of the 'common people,' and so forth.

them knows best how the Pope and the bishops, the Emperor and the princes ought to act; they abuse all the world, and behave as if all responsibility were on their shoulders and they had to look after everything. The only things they don't trouble themselves about are their own trade or work, and their wives and children know well how to complain of this.'[1]

The loudest complaints of the increasing unruliness of the nation—especially of the growing generation—were raised by Luther.

At the beginning of his movement he had repeatedly expressed his confident expectation that his 'gospel' would have a beneficial influence, both morally and religiously, on all those who received it with hearty acceptance.

But he found himself later on driven to the acknowledgment: 'Our evangelists have grown seven times worse than they were before. For after we have learnt the Gospel, we steal, lie, cheat, drink, gluttonise, and indulge in all sorts of vices.' 'He dwelt in the midst of Sodom and Gomorrah,' so he wrote in the year 1523.[2] 'When I was young I remember that most people, even among the rich, drank nothing but water, and ate food of the plainest description and that could easily be obtained; many people did not begin to drink wine till they were thirty years old or more. But nowadays even children are encouraged to drink wine, and that not of a light or ordinary quality, but the strongest foreign wines, and also spirits, which they drink the first thing in the morning.'

'Drunkenness,' he says elsewhere, 'has come upon

[1] *Glos und Comment uff* 80 *Artiklen*, Bl. G.

[2] *Collected Works*, xxviii. 420, and xxxvi. 411; 300.

us like a flood, and has swamped everything.' 'This sin has become a national habit, and is no longer confined to the low, uneducated classes, to the farmers and peasants in the village alehouses, but it is common in all towns and almost in all houses, and especially among the nobility and at the courts of the princes. I remember, when I was a boy, drunkenness was considered a terrible disgrace among the nobility, and was kept in check by worthy lords and princes with stringent laws and heavy punishments; but now it is far worse among them even than among the peasants, and it has come to this, that princes and lords even learn the habit from their esquires, and no longer feel any shame about it; indeed, they almost look upon it as a thing to be proud of, as a fine, princely, or aristocratic qualification. But what is most to be deplored and striven against is that the habit has insinuated itself among the young, who learn it from their elders, and thus become shameless and hardened drunkards in their earliest years; so that now most of the flower of our young men, especially among the nobility and at court, are ruined in health of mind and body long before they have reached manhood. And how can it be otherwise, when those who ought to restrain and punish others are guilty of the vice themselves?'[1]

We find Erasmus also indulging in similar complaints of the growing insubordination of the people under the influence of the new gospel.

'Under the pretext of evangelical freedom,' he says in 1523, 'some men are aiming at unbridled license to indulge their fleshly lusts; others are casting covetous

[1] *Collected Works*, viii. 293–297; further xviii. 350 and xx. 273.

glances at ecclesiastical property; others again are jovially squandering their inheritance in gluttony, fornication, and gambling, trusting to recoup themselves by plunder; and finally there are some whose affairs are in such a state that tranquillity is perilous to them.' He expressed himself even more strongly than this in several letters of the year 1524. 'Under the subterfuge of the Gospel I behold a new, insolent, shameless, ungovernable race growing up.' 'They all of them carry on their lips the five watchwords: Evangel, God's Word, Faith, Christ, the Spirit; but I see many of them conduct themselves in such a manner that I have no doubt whatever that they are possessed by the Devil.' 'The new gospel is producing for us a new species of mankind; it is producing insolent, shameless, dare-devil sinners and liars, quarrellers, ne'er-do-weels, mischief-makers, agitators, ranters, squallers, and bawlers.' 'Once upon a time,' he wrote to Melanchthon, 'the Gospel used to make the savage gentle, the robber benevolent, the quarrelsome peaceable; it taught those who cursed to bless. But these adherents of the new gospel become as if possessed, steal and plunder the property of others, stir up all sorts of tumult. I see new impostors and hypocrites, new tyrants, but not a spark of evangelical spirit.' 'Public worship is rejected by them,' he writes elsewhere, 'and a large number of people now never worship at all. The Mass is set aside, but nothing better has been put in its place. The chief part of their preaching consists in abuse of the lives of the priests, and in very truth the sermons are more calculated to stir up sedition than to kindle piety. The confessional is abolished, and most people do not con-

fess even to God. Fasting and abstinence have grown obsolete, and the land is given over to drunkenness. Outward rites and ceremonies are trampled under foot, but with no profit to the inward spirit, which, to my thinking, has suffered great loss. Heavens! what commotions these evangelical people are for ever raising up! They fly to arms for the least trifle! They will not listen even to their own ministers when the latter do not tickle their ears; on the contrary, these unhappy preachers must straightway be sent about their business the moment that, with any show of frankness, they presume to call in question the conduct of their hearers. While they love nobody but themselves, while they obey neither God nor the bishops, nor the princes and magistrates; while they worship Mammon, their bellies, and their vile lusts, they expect to be considered evangelical, and they appeal to Luther as their teacher and master. Luther preaches everywhere "Faith, Faith;" but where is there any faith? With most of them we 'see nothing but works of the flesh, no trace of spiritual life.' Finally Erasmus went so far as to say: 'Most of them are people who have nothing to lose, bankrupts, fugitives, renegade monks and priests, men who lust after innovation and anarchy, immature youths, senseless women, day labourers, ne'er-do-weels, adventurers, soldiers, criminals, and so forth.' 'I see,' he wrote in the year 1524 in a letter to Luther, 'that these innovations are producing shoals of turbulent, good-for-nothing people, and I dread a bloody insurrection.'[1]

[1] For these and other remarks of Erasmus on the fruits of the new gospel see Döllinger's *Reformation*, i. 6–8.

In consequence of the increasing taste for luxury and display in food and clothing among all classes of society there had grown up more and more in the towns a system of excessive profit-making, which the trading associations in especial carried on. These latter, indeed, benefited enormously from the crying evil of the day, for they had the traffic in foreign luxuries almost entirely in their own hands; they fixed the prices of them almost entirely at their arbitrary will, and within a few years more than doubled them. 'It was owing to the wicked and intolerable oppression which was practised by the great trading associations,' so it was said by a committee chosen from the notables at the Nuremberg Diet of 1523, 'that risings of the common people had occurred in some of the towns, and still worse ones were to be feared if this grievance was not removed.' Tabular statements from the yearly bills and catalogues of the associations themselves, showing the enormous quantity of foreign wares imported and the constant rise in prices, had been laid before this committee, and it had thus been ascertained that, besides all the imports from Venice, 36,000 cwt. of pepper, 24,000 cwt. of cinnamon, and 1,000 bales of saffron were brought over yearly from Lisbon alone. With regard to the increase in prices these lists showed that the price of saffron had risen since 1516 from $2\frac{1}{2}$ gulden and 6 kreuzers a pound to $4\frac{1}{2}$ gulden and 15 kreuzers; pepper had risen since 1518 from 18 to 30 kreuzers a pound; galmjal from $\frac{1}{2}$ a gulden, or 36 kreuzers, to 1 gulden 15 kreuzers the pound; a hundredweight of sugar had cost from 11 to 12 gulden in 1516, and in 1518 it had risen to 20 gulden; Venetian berries had

risen since 1521 from 5 to 9 gulden. And in addition to all this the goods were adulterated.[1]

In a list of grievances sent up to the Diet in the year 1523 the counts, barons, and knights said that the German nation was being brought to ruin and confusion by the trading and engrossing associations. 'It is a well-known fact,' they complained, 'how greatly the large trading associations in Germany have harassed the subjects of the Holy Empire, in nearly all classes, with their monopolies, their combinations, and their arbitrary decrees as to the rate at which every article is to be priced, by their suppression of the ordinary small shopkeepers, from whom we might buy commodities much more advantageously, and by the flagrantly excessive profits which they make yearly out of the German nation, far above all their expenses and all reasonable gain, while at the same time, compared with other classes, they pay next to no taxes towards the expenditure of our common Fatherland and of the Roman Empire.'

Owing to the agency of these associations, as everybody was complaining, 'the coined and uncoined silver, gold, and copper passed out of the hands of the nation, so that there is now a notable want of means for providing for defence against the Turks and for other necessities of the German nation.' With regard to such weakening of the general resources, the petition of grievances goes on to say, 'every subject of the Roman Empire is now more heavily taxed than has ever yet been conceived in human

[1] Ranke's statements (ii. 43–44) in many places do not agree with the above. For the transactions at the Nuremberg Diet with regard to trading companies see Redlich, p. 72 ff.

thought, so that without doubt in one year they do more grievous injury to the German nation than all the other bandits and highwaymen can do in ten years; and yet they must not be called wrong-doers, but honourable men.' Again and again the Diets had launched interdicts against forestalling and monopolies, and against combinations of engrossers and regraters, but these abuses had nevertheless gone on unchecked, because, said the petitioners, 'these traders play into the hands of the princes and great personages, to some of whom they often lend money (at no mean interest) to help them to carry on their quarrels; from others they obtain sums of money to speculate with; to others again, or to their councillors, they give large presents; while yet others they artfully draw over to their side by marriages or other friendly alliances, in order that all, or a large number of them, should assist them in their iniquitous proceedings.'

That the real seat of the evil lay in the large towns rather than elsewhere was the opinion not only of the counts, barons, and knights, but also of the bulk of the people. Already in the year 1524 many voices were heard loudly asserting that not only must the property of the wealthy clergy be taken away, but the over-rich, usurious merchants with all their civic pomp must be reduced, that all foreign wares, all trading companies, and even all trade with foreign countries must be prohibited, and that the princes also, as being in the same boat with the usurers, must be got rid of.[1]

With a view to rooting out the evil wholesale, Luther pleaded in a pamphlet on 'Commerce and Usury'

[1] *Glos und Comment uff* 80 *Articklen*, Bl. G.

('Von Kaufshandlung und Wucher') that the foreign trade by which costly silk and gold work and spices were imported from India and elsewhere should be discontinued. 'Just reckon up,' he says to his readers, 'how much money one fair at Frankfort will take out of the German Empire, without cause or necessity, and you will wonder how it happens that there is as much as one *Heller* left in the country. Frankfort is the leak through which everything that grows in Germany, and all the money that is coined, escape. If the leak were stopped up, we should no longer hear the complaint that everywhere there are only debts and no money, that all districts and towns are drained by interest and usury.' Luther depicted in lively colours the terrible curse of avarice, selfishness, and rascality which enslaved all those engaged in commerce. 'The regraters, forestallers, and monopolists,' he says, 'are public robbers and extortioners. Such people do not deserve to be called men or to live among respectable folk; they are not even worth teaching or admonishing, for their greed and avarice are so monstrous, so shameless, that the evil of it infects others if they but stand in the same spot. The secular authorities would do right if they stripped such wretches of all they had and drove them out of the country.' 'They have also learnt the trick of placing such commodities as pepper, ginger, saffron in damp vaults or cellars, in order to increase their weight. Woollen materials also and furs, marten, sable, &c., are sold in dark vaults or shops, where the air is kept out. This is the universal custom, and indeed for almost each different commodity a special atmosphere is prepared.'

'Nor is there a single article of trade out of which

they cannot make unfair profit by false measuring, counting, or weighing. They produce artificial colours, or they put the pretty things at the top and bottom and the ugly ones in the middle; and indeed there is no end to their trickery, and no one tradesman will trust another, for they know each other's ways.'

'Now there are among the tradespeople great complaints of the noblemen or robbers, because of whom they carry on their business at great risk, being liable to be seized and put to death by them, besides being taxed and robbed.' 'But because such gross injustice and unchristian thievery are perpetrated all over the world by the tradespeople, and even among themselves, what wonder if God ordains that such great and ill-gotten gain should be lost again or stolen, and that the culprits themselves should be knocked on the head or taken prisoners? God Almighty must needs execute justice, for does he not call himself a righteous judge?'

'Above all, if the princes and lords wish to fulfil the duties of their office they must prohibit and punish the vicious system of monopolies, which is altogether unendurable in town or country.' As for the trading companies, they were thoroughly corrupt and made up of greed and injustice.

'They have every sort of commodity in their own power, and they do with them just as they please, raise or lower the prices at their own convenience, and crush and ruin all the small shop-people—just as the pike does with the small fish in the water—as if they were lords over God's creatures and exempt from all laws of charity and religion.'

'How can it be godly and just that in so short a time a man should grow so rich that he can outbid

kings and emperors? As, however, they have brought things to such a pass that all the rest of the world must carry on business with risk and damage, gaining to-day, losing to-morrow, while they continually grow richer and richer, and are able to make up for their losses by higher profits, it is no wonder that they are appropriating to themselves the riches of the whole world.'

'Kings and princes ought to look into these doings, and put a stop to them with stern measures of justice; but I hear that they themselves have a finger in the pie, and that after the words of Isaiah: "Thy princes are rebellious and companions of thieves." Meanwhile they hang the thieves who steal a gulden or half a gulden, and they traffic amicably with those who rob the whole world and commit worse thefts than any others, and as the Roman censor Cato said: "Small thieves lie in towers, fastened to wooden blocks; big ones strut about in gold and silver."

'But what will God say in the end? He will do even as he spoke through Ezekiel: princes and merchants, one thief with another, "shall be melted in the midst thereof as silver is melted in the midst of the furnace," till neither princes nor merchants are left in the land, as I greatly fear will soon come to pass.'

So wrote Luther on the position of affairs a few months before the outbreak of the revolution.

The combinations of engrossers and regraters forced down the country produce of the 'poor man' to the lowest prices, bought up all food commodities in large masses, and kept up an artificial scarcity, while the value of money sank from year to year, and the wages of labour were not raised, but, on the contrary, lowered. The capitalist undertakers at the same time brought the

small manufacturers to ruin, 'for whereas hitherto these had supported themselves by their trades, now, both trade and subsistence were taken from them; and the artisans and small shopkeepers, who were obliged to borrow money from the rich men, were lamentably distressed by usurious interest, so that it was pitiful.'[1] And these cormorants, who sucked the life-blood out of the working classes, would not own that they were in fault, but laid the whole blame on the clergy:

The priests and monks, you say, must bear
The blame of this; but I declare
The merchants are the culprits here,
Combining to make all things dear,
Ye pious men!

The one has bought up all the wine;
The other says, 'All pepper's mine;'
A third has 'cornered' all the lard:
Yet on the priests alone you're hard,
Ye free men!

No conscience have they for their guide,
Weights, measures, coins are falsified.
With wicked art all round they've cheated,
And all their wares adulterated.
Ye free men!

Whatever the poor man may need
He's at the mercy of their greed,
Must buy all goods at their own price.
To root them from the earth were wise,
Ye pious men!

And what the rich vendors did on a large scale the small shopkeepers did in retail by adulteration of their goods; so that all the world was grumbling. These complaints were expressed in numbers of pamphlets. Grocers, butchers, bakers, innkeepers vied with one

[1] *Clag eines einfeltig Klosterbruders*, Bl. D.

another in fraud and trickery. 'It would fill an enormous book,' so said one pamphlet, 'if one wrote down all the different forms of cheating. They think of nothing but their own gain; there is no trust or credit among them; and the food and drink we are obliged to buy are also adulterated. The publicans adulterate their wines in all sorts of ways; the bread is under weight and the flour is adulterated. The artisan turns out bad articles; the butchers sell bad meat; the bakers, unwholesome bread. The peasants also are no better; whatever they bring into the market, whether it be corn, barley, or oats, is dirty; the logs of wood are piled up so that they look nice outside, but inside they are dirty, crooked, and short; the same with hay and straw. Cheating is carried on down to the selling of fruit and eggs.'[1]

In former times, so long as the guild rules were strictly observed, good work was done by the artisans; but now, when these regulations may be broken without penalty, everything is scamped; every journeyman wants to be a master, whether or no he understands his business and has served an apprenticeship; lads who have not completed their training are set up as masters; they all aim at injuring one another; the work is finished off in a hurry and with regard to outward appearance only; the purchasers, on their side, think only of cheapness and not of the quality of the goods. Fixed prices, which were the custom under the reign of the guilds, are no longer adhered to. '*Nürnbergisch Gebot ist halb ab, das macht rechte Käuf.*'[2] If a tradesman mentions 'the right price of his goods, at

[1] See Baur, p. 123; Hagen, ii. 323. See also our own statements in vol. i. (15th and 16th editions), p. 428 (English translation, p. 86).

[2] 'The Nuremberg rule is half price, that's the right way of buying.'

which and no other he can sell them, the purchaser pays no attention, but tries to beat him down to the Nuremberg "half price." In consequence of all these injurious innovations, so the people complained, all good hand-work and trade were being ruined, and it was a rare thing nowadays to find contented artisans and tradespeople, as rare also to meet with contented customers, and 'the one and the other are all equally to blame.' [1]

Added to all this were the evils incident to the age. In proportion as the materialistic spirit and the love of money-making gained ground, with the concomitant distaste for the higher pursuits of life, an increasing number of young people devoted themselves to commerce and remunerative trades. 'Nobody will learn anything nowadays except what brings in money; and mercantile houses, shops, and taverns are multiplying inordinately, not only in towns, but also in villages, and it is a great dishonour,' said a disciple of the new gospel in the year 1524, 'to the Holy Evangel, which God has in these last days caused to be so clearly revealed to the people.'

The tendency against which the preacher Martin Butzer had inveighed was already at that time manifesting itself among the so-called evangelicals: 'All the world is running after those trades and occupations which give least work to do and bring in most gain, without any concern for their neighbours, or for honest and good repute. The study of arts and sciences is set aside for the basest kinds of manual work.' 'All the clever heads which have been endowed by God with capacity for the nobler studies are engrossed by commerce,

[1] *Clag eines einfeltig Klosterbruders*, Bl. D^2.

which is nowadays so saturated with dishonesty that it is the last sort of business an honourable man ought to engage in.' 'Most of those who make their boast of the Gospel,' said Wolfgang Capito, 'accustom their children to luxury and the pursuit of riches.'[1]

A similar condition of things prevailed among the orthodox believers. 'Things have become so deplorable in the last few years,' said the author of the 'Clag eines einfeltig Klosterbruders,' 'that no Christian mother can any more send her children to the schools, which either have been abolished or are despised; so all the young folk are turned into tradespeople, and the children of the poor, who are especially God-forsaken, become petty craftsmen in towns and villages, without much knowledge of their trades; most of them become small shopkeepers, pedlars, hawkers, all of which varieties abound in excess. The towns are filled with idle, mischievous shop-people, who have little or nothing to do;[2] and in villages and hamlets traders and dealers of all sorts and descriptions are setting up, whereby the towns find themselves injured in their commerce.'[3] 'Many peasants,' says the same writer, 'learn handicrafts; hence there is too much handiwork; they sell their goods cheap—for a mere nothing; good work has no market; we find artisans, shopkeepers, and small retailers in every village.' As regarded the towns, this dissolving of the old order of things was pregnant with importance, for the peasants were no longer obliged to fetch the necessaries of life from the towns. They could buy everything conveniently from the pedlars, or they would them-

[1] See the quotations in Döllinger's *Reformation*, i. 435–437.
[2] See Anshelm, vi. 91–92.
[3] See the *Beschwerden der Städte*, in Jörg, p. 310.

selves become producers—at the cost, naturally, of agriculture. The town artisan, instead of himself producing articles of value, preferred to deal in the produce of others; 'whether his business be great or small he must also be a merchant, and without adequate capital he plunges into debt and bankruptcy.'

Ten years earlier, artists, artisans, workmen of every description had been kept well employed, and had made good incomes by the innumerable churches and ornamental buildings that were erected everywhere; they had reaped rich harvests from the plentiful orders[1] for 'pictures and carving, gold and silver decorations, and other ecclesiastical jewel-work and costly church furniture and vestments for divine service, which came in from all quarters—from fraternities, guilds, and private persons, both men and women.' 'But all this was becoming a thing of the past.' 'Churches and cloisters were no more built and adorned, but, alas! destroyed, and many hands were left unemployed,' this all the more 'as in the hurry of events, and the constant apprehension of tumult and insurrection and perils of all sorts, the laity also, excepting the very richest, had very little built or made. They kept their money in their own purses.' 'Many people who used to find work, now loaf idly about the streets, or hawk about squibs, lampoons, libellous pamphlets, and abominable caricatures. Noble art is not much in request now.'[2]

[1] See Allihn, pp. 103, 110.

[2] *Glos und Comment*, Bl. K^3. See Joh. Manlius, *Locorum Communium Collectanea* (Basileae, 1563), where we read (i. 80): 'Doctor Ambachius [a medical man at Leipzig], optimus vir, dicebat instaurationem Evangelii fuisse detrimentum omnibus artificibus exceptis medicis. Omnes

Even Hans Holbein the younger, one of the greatest painters of all ages, was obliged to undertake house painter's work, and to paint coats of arms for two guldens apiece, in order to make a living.[1] 'The art of painting,' Albert Dürer complains in a pamphlet addressed to Wilibald Pirkheimer, 'is greatly despised among us Germans nowadays by many people, and they say it tends to produce idolatry.' 'But a genuine Christian is as little likely,' he goes on to say, 'to be led into idolatry or superstition by a picture or an image as a virtuous man to commit a murder because he carries a pistol at his side. He must be a very blockhead who would worship and pray to a lump of wood or stone.' A fine work of art, Dürer said, must do more good than harm, and one of the great recommendations of art is that it is honourable work.[2] The shoals of low caricatures and comic pictures that were circulated at the beginning of the religious disturbances—especially by Lucas Cranach from Wittenberg—did not contribute to the improvement, but rather to the degradation, of the people.[3]

enim pictores, statuarii, aurifici conqueruntur se valde esurire. Medicis vero prodest, quia postquam sancti desierunt curare morbos, iterum ad medicos homines confugiunt.'

[1] Woltmann, i. 341. Soon after the outbreak of the evangelical movement Holbein was obliged to suspend the execution of his splendid wall pictures in the council house at Basle, and in consequence of being thrown out of work he saw himself compelled to migrate to England. The following fact is also characteristic of the conditions of art at that period: In January 1526 the collective body of Basle painters petitioned the town council that, in order to earn bread for their wives and children, they might be entrusted with the whole work of painting the masks for the Christmas processions (*ibid.* i. 340. See also our statement in vol. vi., 13th and 14th editions, pp. 31–32).

[2] Thausing, *Dürer's Briefe und Tagebücher*, p. 55 (Letters and Diaries).

[3] A large number of these are still preserved in the former Augustinian

The universal luxury that had become prevalent in the country, the excessive appropriation of profits by capital, and the systematic exploitation of the working classes by financial trickery, by keeping up an artificial dearness in all necessary commodities, and by adulteration of all articles of food and clothing, the suppression of small industries and shops, the decay of handicrafts, and the low rate of wages, were the chief causes of the bitter enmity which was seen to spring up in all the towns between the propertied and the unpropertied classes. The working population of the towns were advancing steadily towards pauperism, while the ranks of the proletariat were swelling more and more in numbers, and the general rancour and irritation of the poor against the rich gained in intensity in proportion as the latter indulged in greater and greater ostentatious display of wealth.

In many of the towns there was full justification for the complaint that the clergy, in spite of the needs of the time, would not reduce their worldly pomp; and when bishops themselves were even seen 'to dance and perform antics in public' the disgust of the people with such 'unspiritual and unchristian persons' is easily understood. 'Very sweet and enticing in the ears of the destitute and empty-handed sounded then the cry of the agitator!' 'It would be better for the salvation of souls if the lord prelates were not so rich and luxurious, and if their possessions were divided among the poor.'[1]

cloister at Wittenberg. The coarseness of these productions, which represent the struggle against the papacy and the whole ecclesiastical body, is truly revolting (see Schuchardt, ii. 240–247).

[1] Sigmund Meisterlin, in his chronicle of Nuremberg, has admirably

Another fruitful source of hatred and dissension was the ill-feeling aroused in many communities by the 'city magnates.' In most of the towns, in the year 1524, these men had succeeded in getting the municipal government entirely into their own hands, and they not infrequently made use of their power to oppress the people with excessive taxes and imposts, to embezzle or appropriate the city funds, and to carry on all manner of other dishonourable and despotic practices. Many of the town councillors also incurred the odium of the populace by their participation in the 'combinations' of the great business undertakers, and hence in the exploitation of the working-classes.

After the beginning of the religious disturbances the 'city magnates' found themselves constantly pitted against a widespread body of men whom 'the Gospel' had imbued with one motor principle, who based all their claims on the Gospel, and who branded every attempt to interfere with revolutionary proceedings as a penal violation of Gospel liberty. The alliance of the municipalities with the proletariat against the 'city magnates' in the years 1524 and 1525 secured victory to the former in almost all quarters; the magnates succumbed to the terrorism of the masses. 'There is great division in the towns,' wrote the Bavarian chancellor, Leonhard von Eck, on March 2, 1525; 'those among the Lutherans who are poor take the side of the peasants; the non-Lutherans and the wealthy Lutherans are opposed to the peasants.'[1]

The Franconian town of Forchheim was the starting

described all the different elements of discontent which in his time were fermenting in the towns.

[1] See Vogt, *Die bayerische Politik*, p. 402.

point of the socialist rising. The commonalty took possession of the town key on May 26, 1524, put the magistrate under custody, raised the peasantry all around, and posted up 'articles' on rents and tithes, and freedom of water, forest, and pasture.

Simultaneously with this rising 'the common people of the Black Forest threw off their allegiance to the Abbot of St. Blasien; in future, they declared, they would pay no more taxes and render no more service; at their backs was the commonalty of the town of Waldshut, who had put them up to this revolt.'

In the neighbourhood of Nuremberg also, the peasants banded together and held counsel as to how they should emancipate themselves from the oppression of the secular lords, and escape from the obligation to pay tithes, rent, taxes, and interest. 'The burghers and the peasants must join together, or it will be no good,' said some of the inhabitants of the town, who wanted to contrive a rising against the Council. 'There were many people in Nuremberg who stirred up the peasants and wanted to share the property of the rich; for the age of Christian liberty and brotherhood had come, and one class, it was said, ought to be as rich as another.' This communistic spirit was rampant also in the cultivated town circles, as was demonstrated by the lawsuit of the 'godless painters.' The 'godless painters' repudiated all secular authority and insisted on community of goods; every burgher was in their eyes a magistrate and an executor of justice.[1]

[1] See Jörg, p. 142; 'Brief des Abtes Johann von St. Blasien vom 30. Mai 1524,' in Schreiber, *Bauernkrieg* (Peasants' War), i. 1–2. See also above, p. 108.

The socialist agitators had little trouble in inflaming the peasantry, for discontent with the present state of things was quite as great in the country as in the towns, and there were also justifiable grounds in the provinces for complaint.

Already before the general introduction of the Roman code of law many governors of provinces and lords of manors, both spiritual and secular, had been minded to convert into bond-servants the free peasants, of whom there still remained a numerous body, and to multiply the number of dues which were exacted from them. But the more the German Christian law was displaced by the Roman law, the worse did the 'poor man's' position become: with his ancient laws he lost also his ancient freedom. The jurists, schooled in the canon of the old pagan administration, instructed their noble patrons and employers in all the 'legal' methods of taming down the peasants, 'so that they might not shoot up too high;' put them up to ways of cutting down the property of the farmers and of multiplying and increasing the feudal taxes, dues, and socage services. If the country people had first been reduced to mere right of usage in the communal woods, fields, and meadows, even this right of usage was by degrees in great measure denied them; the forests were more especially laid under interdict by cruel hunting laws, which deprived the people of all rights of chase, while unlimited indulgence in the preservation of game caused enormous damage to the peasants' fields.

Such were the methods by which funds were procured to feed the ever increasing taste of the upper classes for luxury and magnificence; moreover, the changes which

the system of warfare was at that time undergoing, and the gradual substitution of paid soldiery for the old feudal military service, necessitated the raising of still larger sums, and fresh tricks and devices were daily invented for squeezing money out of the poor peasant folk. In the year 1502 the Electors themselves acknowledged that the 'poor man' was so grievously overburdened with dues, taxes, fines, services, rents, and other exactions that it could not be tolerated for ever. But the worst grievance was that the peasantry had scarcely any voice now in their own concerns. Formerly the peasants had had a voice everywhere in the management of their affairs themselves, and had taken part in the national tribunals and in the assemblies of the parishes and marks; now, however, the Roman law was denuding them of their customary rights and traditions in every direction. The lawyers, 'those cringing, grasping blood-suckers,' seemed far worse enemies to the poor man than the robber knights who devastated their fields and reduced their homes to ashes. Moreover, the robber warfare and feuds increased with the universal disappearance of legal restraint engendered by revolution, and the unprotected farmers and peasants in the plains were frequently a prey to bands of freebooting *Landsknechts*.[1]

[1] See our own statements concerning the above in vol. i. (15th and 16th ed.), pp. 499–500, 514–528, &c., and especially p. 624 (English translation, ii. 159–160, 172–183, 287). Wimpheling says, in the dedication of his *Ueberblick über die Mainzer Geschichte* to the Archbishop Albrecht in 1515, that the Archbishop ought to exert himself to the end 'ut cum incole tum advene tuto per terras nostras ambulent nec innocentissimi quique a sicariis equitibus contra rationem et omnem legem inhumanissime depredentur et cum forte qui se ad defendendum parant, jaculis confodiantur, uti cuidam prestanti viro ex Marchia illustrissimi patris tui vel ad Cesarem vel ad summum pontificem equitaturo miserabiliter accidit. Et

The isolated peasant risings at the end of the fifteenth century and in the first decade of the sixteenth century were largely due to these measures of oppression. 'How should it be otherwise,' asks a writer of the year 1524, 'when the rich lords and the many rich, usurious peasants, feast and gluttonise, while the small men are in extremest need through scarcity of crops, high prices, robbers, lawyers, and other rascals, and tumult easily springs up, for agitators and ill-disposed persons have no difficulty in exciting these poor people to revolt?'[1]

The first agitation developed in the space of a few weeks to a general outbreak, and from July 1524 the socialist insurrection spread like wildfire from town to town, from village to village. Confined at first within the space running along the Swiss border, from the Black Forest to the Lake of Constance, it very soon covered the whole district between the Danube, the Lech, and the Lake of Constance, and stretched over Alsatia, the Palatinate, the Rheingau, Franconia, Thuringia, Hesse, Saxony, and Brunswick; over the Tyrol, the archbishopric of Salzburg, and the duchies of Styria, Carinthia, and Krain; in South Germany, Bavaria, where no quarter was given to the demagogue agitators

hi tamen latrones pauperculum ac stolidum pro exiguo furto, quo rapina ipsorum longe immanior est, ad laqueum nonnunquam judicare solent. Utinam germanici proceres et equites hanc infamem labem, quam de ipsis eciam Suitenses et ore et impressionibus predicant a se tandem abdicarent: sicut in toto Francie regno terras esse tutissimas viatoresque securissimos, ex pio Guilhelmo Argentinensi episcopo . . . in patria mea nuper his auribus audivi.' (In the Castle library at Aschaffenburg.)

[1] *Vermanung an cristlich Oberkeit und alle Cristen in gemein* (Admonition to Christian Rulers and to all Christians in general). 1524 (without place).

and where the Government acted with firmness and wisdom, was the only district which remained free from disturbances.

There came a moment in Germany when it seemed as if everything would be turned upside down, and as if there could be no escape from the tyranny of the mob.

CHAPTER III

UNIVERSALITY OF THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION

THE revolution, which had now broken out in earnest, soon gathered into itself the most heterogeneous elements, and set up claims of infinite variety.

'Many among the insurgents,' says a contemporary, 'only wanted to recover their ancient rights in parish property and their ancient hereditary legal privileges, and to have their feudal burdens and services lightened; others wished to throw off all service and to be themselves lords; others again wished to have neither a secular nor a spiritual prince over them, but to obey the emperor alone; many more, and these formed the largest number among the agitators and incendiaries, wanted to share everything with the rich, and to possess all money and land in common with them, and agitated for a general division and distribution of fields, forests, and meadows, for according to the Holy Scriptures, they said, all property must be in common and there must be no distinction of classes; according to divine right we were all equal before God. On this point the impoverished and destitute country people were of one mind with the town mobs. These socialist pretensions were drummed into their heads by the multitudes of agitators who constituted themselves into leaders—decayed secular clergy and renegade monks, ruined noblemen, lawyers and scriveners

out of work, soldiers, journeymen, innkeepers, and so forth.[1] Eberlin von Günzburg also realised that the chief cause of the revolution was that 'the poor wished to become rich, the subjects to be lords and to make all things equal.'[2] And the truth of this is confirmed by many of the revolutionists themselves, especially the leaders, whose abundant written memoirs show plainly that their great object was to overthrow all existing law and social order, and bring in the reign of equality and fraternity.

Thomas Münzer made no secret of the fact that community of all worldly goods was the object he had set before him in the foundation of his brotherhood.[3] The former Teutonic knight Johann Laue preached publicly in Mühlhausen that the wealthy burghers' idols of gold must be snatched out of their caskets, for all wealth was common property.

In Alsatia the demagogue Wolf Gerstenwell confessed to the same intentions: 'the rich must become poor,' he said, 'and the poor rich; they meant to do away with ruling authorities and be lords themselves.' Peasant leaders from Rappottsweiler made similar depositions.[4]

Simon von Weiersheim, from the Wanzenau, in company with his associates, confessed before seven witnesses that 'they had not only meant to divide all parish property among themselves, and to give the poor as much as the rich, but it had also been their intention to root out and destroy the nobility and clergy

[1] *Contra M. Lutherum et Lutheranismi Fautores*, fol. 15.
[2] See Riggenbach, p. 243.
[3] See Seidemann, *Beiträge*, ii. 382, and Mühlhauser, *Chronik*, p. 393.
[4] See Schreiber, *Bauernkrieg*, ii. 195–196.

and to share their goods between them.' 'Whereas he was now poor,' said Jörg Voltz, 'he had looked to becoming rich in this manner.'[1]

Fired with the same enthusiasm for communistic equality, the town proletariat marched about the bishopric of Bamberg under the leadership of a barber. The rabble yelled out that the city magnates must be put to death, the nobles, the monks, and the priests exterminated. The barber, Hans Hartlieb, in the *Langen Gasse*, the foremost in the uproar, was going to reform everything, so he said, according to the Gospel, and make all things equal.[2]

Outside Würzburg the peasants held forth to the effect that, 'as they ought all to be brothers together, it were well to proceed with the work at once and make the rich divide their possessions with the poor, especially those who had derived their wealth from commerce, or had otherwise obtained it through the "poor man." At Rotenburg on the Tauber also, the communist agitators interpreted the doctrine of Christian brotherly love as meaning that all things should be in common; that all rulers and magistrates should be done away with; that no man must possess more than another; that each must lend to the other, and that nobody must ask for reimbursement of a debt, but must wait till repayment came of itself.'[3]

By the confessions extorted on the rack from ringleaders of the Allgau it came out 'that they had meant to kill all the secular and spiritual rulers;' leaders of the Franconian peasantry stated that their 'one object

[1] See Jörg, p. 292; Schreiber, *Bauernkrieg*, ii. 197–198.
[2] Jörg, pp. 293–294.
[3] See Bensen, p. 78.

had been to exterminate the princes and the nobility and to burn down their castles.'[1]

The more moderate of the insurgents claimed, in conformity with the preaching of the new gospel, the restoration, at any rate, of the Mosaic institution of a year of jubilee in which all debts were remitted, all property which had been lost through debts was restored to its former owners, and all bondsmen received their freedom.

Such a demand as this struck at the root of all municipal existence.

Luther had expressed the wish that such a year of jubilee might be established; the preacher Strauss at Eisenach had declared it to be a God-given command, which all Christians were undoubtedly bound to obey; nobody was bound to pay interest, he said, even if the magistrates ordered them to do so. Tyranny reigned everywhere—so Strauss preached—but the day of vengeance was at hand. 'The poor man is constrained to pay up even though his wife and children should die of hunger and poverty. . . . But vengeance will surely not tarry. The great grandees, however, do not think of such a possibility; they care nothing for God's Word and God's commands, and are quite satisfied with themselves when, by the advice of the monks and priests (who also have an eye to the chance of filling their stomachs), they have bestowed the goods ground out of their poor vassals on the sanctuaries of idol-mongers: 'they are safe then to go to heaven, even though the Devil should carry them thither.' The preacher Mantel addressed the peasants of Würtemberg in the following strain: 'O

[1] Jörg, pp. 295, 298.

dear brethren, O ye poor pious men, if the years of jubilee come those will be the righteous years.'[1]

The characters of most of the leaders of the revolution corresponded closely to the destructive violence of its aims.

Thus, for instance, the insurgents of the Odenwald were under the leadership of a ruined innkeeper, whose days had been mostly spent in gambling and drinking, and who saw his opportunity in an insurrection. At the head of the Oehring conspirators stood the cutler Claus Salb, 'an avaricious man, who hoped to help himself up again by a revolution;' at the head of the Neckar gang was the wild Jäcklein Norbach, dreaded far and near, who had murdered the magistrate of Böckingen, and hoped now to blot out his debts. 'My watchword,' he said, 'is, burn and destroy.' In the Würzburg district also, 'the good-for-nothing scoundrels who had lost all credit everywhere, owing to their disreputable lives, were chosen by the populace and set up as leaders.' The actual general of the body of insurgents was Hans Bermeter, who 'had some skill as a piper and lute-player, was not wanting in eloquence, and had spent his days in drinking and feasting; his behaviour, moreover, was so wanton and unseemly that there were few who cared to have any dealings with him; he had, indeed, formerly, been caught in a public theft. In whatever quarter, street, or house he knew that disorderly ruffians like himself were gathered together, who squandered their own money and coveted other men's goods, to these he would join himself. He reviled the authorities and praised up liberty—preached

[1] Sauter, *Geschichte Würtembergs unter den Herzogen*, ii. 105.

how men could free themselves without trouble from all grievances, and how all might become rich.'[1] The chief of the rebels in Bamberg, Uhl von Pegnitz, was 'always tipsy and dissolute, and belonged to the class who have nothing, and squander whatever they earn.'

Another ringleader of Bamberg was a thief 'who must always have a hand in every quarrel, and treated his old father badly and disrespectfully;' a third, 'who had made a good hundred others seditious, and had declared that he would have no master but God, was a butcher and always the worse for wine.' In the camp of the Bavarian peasants the leader was Hans Lorenz, a drunken sot who was ambitious of proclaiming the Gospel and righteousness; their standard-bearer was a broken-down nobleman, well known in the country as a murderer and highway robber. One of the leaders of the Oberallgau peasants, Cunz Wirt auf der Halden, had, before the insurrection, according to his own confession, committed thirty robberies, on account of which he had been deprived of the right to carry arms. In Langenfalza the cobbler Melchior Wigand was in command—'a man who had formerly followed the ranks and had latterly been given up to evil ways.' At the head of the band of the Langenfalza mob, sworn to the destruction of all cloisters and castles, stood Albrecht Menge, 'by trade alternately, according to circumstances, a French doctor, or a barber, or a cloth-shearer.'[2]

It was this combined revolt of the whole proletarian class—burghers, peasants, and nobles—against the ex-

[1] Lorenz Fries, *Bauernkrieg*, i. 61–63.

[2] For fuller details see Seidemann, *Beiträge*, ii. 513–527.

isting order of things which gave the revolution its dangerous character. It had zealous promoters also among the inferior clergy, 'the "poor men" in the sacerdotal ranks, who, no less than the others, looked to helping themselves on to their legs again by means of an insurrection.' A large proportion of these lower clerics had long since looked with envy and ill-favour on the rich abbeys and cloisters, and on the 'high-born lords in bishops' mitres and chapter-houses, who had such large revenues and so many benefices,' while they themselves received no income beyond the many precarious tithes and parish fees. And as now, in consequence of the religious innovations, tithes and fees failed almost entirely in many districts, the poverty among the village pastors and vicars increased to a great extent.' 'Many of them became "good evangelicals" because they had no food, because they too wanted to live on the fat of the land, to storm cloisters and castles, and carry home good "evangelical booty;" but it was not heard say that many of them led good evangelical lives.'

No more the village parsons were
Contented, for their food was scanty:
Their misery increased in plenty.
So when the war 'gan raging there
They too seized arms in their despair.
To shield the Gospel was their aim,
And in its cause the world inflame,
They said: but if the truth were told,
To get them wives was the real cause,
And freedom from all rule and laws.

'The seducers of the peasants, those priests who govern the mobs,' wrote the learned Beatus Rhenanus to a friend in 1525, 'deserve to be sent off to remote desert islands, for they breathe nothing but

riot and plunder, and hatred of all ruling authorities.'[1]

It was the country clergy, more especially, who turned evangelical and joined the socialists in large numbers. Many followed the peasant bands as unwilling adherents, driven thereto by stress of circumstances; but many also, from personal choice, joined as field preachers, advisers, chaplains, or generals of the rebels; and many others even themselves incited the peasants of their villages to rebellion. The outward sign of their deserting their own Church and joining the ranks of the insurgents consisted in their abolishing the Mass in their churches and getting married at once. Thus, for instance, from the small diocese of the Bishop Prince of Kempten as many as nine clergymen became participators in the movement, either as followers or agitators; and the earldom of Tyrol contributed an even larger contingent. In the principalities of the Margrave Casimir of Brandenburg the priests 'had the upper hand in everything.' When the Bishop of Augsburg was attempting in person to negotiate peace between the princes and the peasants in the peasants' camp, 'several priests came forward against him with armour and weapons.' In the neighbourhood of Eichstadt also several renegade clerics were among the chief leaders of the peasant army.[2]

[1] A. Horawitz, 'Beatus Rhenanus: ein biographischer Versuch,' in the *Sitzungsberichten* of the Academy of Vienna, Philosoph.-Histor. Class (1872), lxx. 235. At first Rhenanus had been on the side of Luther, from whom he expected a reform within the Church (pp. 224–233), but after the horrors of the peasant war he became more inclined again to the Catholic faith, and belonged henceforth to the middle party, concerning which see Pastor, *Reunionsbestrebungen*, p. 125 ff. See also *Correspondence of Beatus Rhenanus*, p. 412.

[2] For fuller details concerning the share of the inferior clergy in the peasant revolt see Jörg, pp. 191–200.

The greater part of the so-called 'peasant army' was made up of godless riffraff, thieves, gamblers, homeless peasants, decayed burghers, vagrants, tinkers, deserters, street musicians, and so forth.

'But among these,' says a contemporary from the Rhineland, 'there was also a goodly number of well-to-do, respectable peasants. But if you ask how this came to pass it was in this manner: whenever in any village there were lewd and vagabond fellows who had nothing to lose, they assembled themselves together, stirred up a row, and soon began setting fire to places, and struck terror into the hearts of the peasants. The latter saw no help anywhere, for it was the same in the towns, where the vagrants and ruined people terrified the burghers. But it was worse in the villages, for many of the ruined people came out of the towns and inflamed the lower orders of the peasants. Thus the dissolute, good-for-nothing folk overpowered the worthy and well-to-do people, threatened to burn everything if they would not join them, even to kill every one who refused to join, and to drive in a post in front of his house; broke into houses and carried off firearms and food; whereupon the young people became rebellious and drank inordinately, and the most disgraceful things were done, which cannot be written about. And so the good people were constrained to join the bad ones, and the ranks of the rebels became greater and greater.'

These measures of terrorism, plunder, and incendiarism were adopted everywhere by the ringleaders of the insurrection against those who would not take part with them. In a record from Constance we read: 'The peasants banded together all over the

country, and although this was not liked by the pious and respectable people, but was, on the contrary, a great grievance to them, none the less there were so many of the young, and of those who had nothing of their own, that the older ones and the pious people were compelled to join with them; for if any refused, the rebels drove in a stake in front of their house and threatened them that if they did not join them and assemble round the stake which was in front of their house, then the first man who met them would kill or stab them, and no punishment would be inflicted on the murderer.' The compiler of the annals of Biberach tells the same sort of tale: 'Whenever any one among the peasants refused to join their league, they stuck a post in front of his house, which was a sign that all his property was to be seized, or else he was to give them a sum of money for it.' A Kempten chronicle makes the same statement: 'Whoever would not take part in this sedition was constrained by force. Some, who at first would have nothing to do with the rebels, were obliged afterwards to give them money, or they had a post stuck in front of their houses.' The leader of the Allgau gang, Knopt of Luibas, 'whilom the servant of a bleacher at Kempten,' deposed in court 'that they had unanimously decided, in their "brotherhood," that from all those who refused to join their undertaking and enrol themselves in their league and brotherhood they would take everything they had, put them to death, and drive away their wives and children.'[1] The Abbot of Kempten wrote as follows concerning the insurrectionary peasants: 'They forced into their ranks the peaceable congregation and officials of the house

[1] See Jörg, p. 219.

of God, who would gladly have abided by their honour, duty, and vows; they constrained them to join their accursed brotherhood, and they threatened to burn and otherwise injure those who refused; also, they stuck posts in front of the houses of some of them, did great damage to them, deprived them of everything they had, and treated them as evil-doers.'[1] The sovereign lords themselves in some cases gave their loyal subjects leave to join the insurgents, in order to save them from being entirely ruined by fire and slaughter.[2]

The immediate punishment inflicted on all those who refused to join the 'Christian Brotherhood' of the revolutionists was the 'secular ban.' 'If you enrol yourselves in our Christian league and brotherhood,' wrote the chief leaders and councillors of the Black Forest branch to the town of Villingen, 'the will of God is fulfilled by obedience to his command of brotherly love. If, however, you refuse to do this, we place you under the secular ban, and we herewith declare you so placed by authority of this letter.' By reason of this secular ban they were considered as 'dead, cast-off limbs;' nobody might hold any intercourse with them, 'or bring them food, corn, drink, wood, meat, salt, or anything else; nobody might buy from them or sell to them; all markets were closed against them, and they were deprived of all rights in forest, field, water, and the chase.' 'And if any one of those who had joined the league disregarded these orders, he was henceforth also to be punished with the same ban and sent back with wife and children among the outlaws.

[1] See Jörg, p. 218.

[2] See Bensen's account of the village of Sontheim, H. M. Bensen's *Geschichte des Bauernkriegs in Ostfranken* (1840), p. 121.

Further, as all the treason, tyranny, and corruption came from castles, cloisters, and priestly establishments, these were, from this very hour, to be placed under the ban.' In the village and valley of Kirchzarten this proclamation was issued in the words: 'The whole body of the Christian league and assembly exhorts you all in Christian love to lend your support to divine justice and your adhesion to the holy evangel. To this we demand an answer quickly and without any delay, and you are hereby admonished for the first time: evangel, evangel, evangel.' To the town of Freiburg the chief leaders and councillors of the 'brethren of the holy evangel' wrote: 'It is our opinion that you also intend to be brethren with us and to help in the spread of the Word of God and the holy evangel, which nobody ought to oppose, and if this be so we too will live with you as brethren.' In the contrary case, however, 'we intend, in company with our other brethren and associates, to encamp nearer to you and to force our way into your town.' Schemes were already on foot for laying trains for four fires at one end of the town. 'The insurgents,' so the town council of Freiburg complained, 'had plundered and destroyed churches and castles, and burnt some of them to the ground, and thereby reduced the clergy and the nobility to such misery that it was piteous to behold, and by their cruelty they had so terrorised the towns that they had brought them over to their league: the whole of the Breisgau had been coerced into their brotherhood by violence.' But the insurgents on their part declared that all their proceedings had 'no other aim than to promote brotherly love and continual peace, according to the Word of Almighty God, and to execute divine

justice;' they wished 'out of brotherly love to preach the Word of God and the holy evangel to the common people.'[1]

'To hear the insurgents talk,' wrote Clemens Endres, 'it would seem that all this is happening for the sake of the holy evangel and the Divine Word. In Switzerland, in the Oberland, in the Black Forest, in Suabia, Franconia, wherever one goes, indeed, one hears nothing but "evangel, evangel," and all riots and villany are justified with this cry. The burden of the *Volkslieder* is:

They raise their boasting high
About God's Word, and Faith,
Their cause to glorify,
Yet only scatter death.

They gave out that their yoke
Was much too hard to bear;
We all were Christian folk,
And equal we all were.
Their Gospel faith, said they,
Made them resist this sway.
Parsons and squires were cheaters and liars.
No farthing more they'd give,
But free henceforth they'd live.

The people furious became;
They took things without any right;
Whoever ventured this to blame
A parson's menial was hight.
In the corn-lofts like mice they nibbled,
The cellars they quite cleared,
With wine and liquor tippled,
Grew roysterous and ribald:
Priests round about, like Judas, veered,
And overran the granary hoards
To get bread for their empty boards.

[1] See Schreiber's *Bauernkrieg*, ii. 88–89, 101, 187, 219, and iii. 57, 200.

The following words were put into the mouths of the proletarians:—

The Gospel vassalage
  Brought us poor folk rich guerdon,
Freed us from villainage
  And every unjust burden.
Taught rich and poor they should
  Each other love, and that 'twas right
To share all goods; this law we would
  Fulfil with reason and delight.
And each one we'll expel
  Who dares oppose this lore—
Yea, every red-robed swell,
Nor ask if it were fell
  To act thus, any more.

The 'Divine Word,' the 'divine law uttered forth in the holy evangel,' as opposed to the laws of the Church and society, had become, chiefly in consequence of the preaching of the apostate clergy, the universal watchword of the revolutionists of Germany in the sixteenth century, as it had been the watchword of the Hussites in Bohemia in the preceding century.

In the peasants' 'Programme' also, which emanated from Upper Suabia and was circulated all over the Empire, the twelve 'fundamental and righteous articles of all the peasantry and vassals of the spiritual and temporal rulers' were all declared to be grounded on the Gospel and the 'Divine Word.'[1]

In the preface to these articles it says that the blame of the insurrection is, in a godless and criminal manner, ascribed by many antichristians to the Gospel; but the Gospel produces only love, peace, and patience, and the peasants were no insurgents, because they

[1] Readers interested in the still unsettled question of the origin and authorship of these twelve articles are referred to a lengthy note on the subject in vol. ii. p. 475 of the German original (17th and 18th ed.)

asked for nothing more in these articles than to be allowed to hear the Gospel and to live according to its precepts. As their principal right the peasants claimed for themselves, and also for those whom they destined to be the expounders of the divine law as contained in the Gospel, to be recognised as the true interpreters of that Gospel.

In the first article they demanded the right for each parish of appointing its own clergymen, and of deposing them if they behaved in an unbecoming manner. The pastors chosen were to be bound over to preach the pure and unadulterated Gospel, without any human additions, teaching, or commands; they were always to proclaim the true faith.

In the articles relating to political conditions they made the following demands, based on the authority of the Word of God :—

1. The payment of tithes was instituted in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament this law was abolished; nevertheless they would give a tithe of their corn for the maintenance of the pastor chosen by themselves, for the support of the needy, and for the diminution of taxes. But they would not give the tithe of their cattle, for God had created cattle for the free use of men.

2. Hitherto they had been looked upon as bondsmen, which was most miserable, seeing that 'Christ had redeemed and purchased us all with his precious blood, the peasant and the shepherd as well as the highest in rank, none excepted. Hence, according to the Scriptures, we are free, and we mean to be free.' Nevertheless they would render due obedience in all fit and Christian respects to the authorities chosen and set up by God.

3. It was not only unreasonable and unbrotherly, but also selfish and contrary to the Divine Word, that, according to the custom hitherto followed, no poor man had the right to catch or shoot game, birds, or fish. They therefore demanded this right, which God had granted to each one alike when he gave man dominion over the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea.

4. All forest lands, which the clergy and the laity had appropriated, and had possessed themselves of without purchase, were to revert to the community, without compensation to the previous owners, and each individual was to be entitled to take from them as much wood as he needed for building or burning, without any payment.

5. Feudal services to the sovereign lords were not to be augmented; dues were to be regulated according to the opinions of honourable people, and restored to a reasonable scale; judicial penalties were only to be inflicted according to the ancient written traditions, and the death dues to be entirely abolished.

6. All fields and acres which have not been lawfully purchased must revert to the community.

Many of these claims were just and reasonable, and the articles were drawn up with wisely calculated moderation. But there lurked in them nevertheless a decided communistic tendency.

According to the original statutes of marks and villages, those people only had rights of usage in the communal property who were actual settlers or proprietors, owners of separate independent habitations; the so-called 'aliens' who lived in the midst of the community without any 'ground property' of their

own, artisans, day labourers, the very poor, all persons, in short, who might be included under the head of lodgers or tenants, had no such rights.[1] If, however, as the articles insisted, wood, game, birds, and fish were, according to the Divine Word, free to all, the poor and those owning no property would find it no difficult matter to claim, according to the same 'Word,' that all things should be in common.

The last clause also gave wide scope for further demands. It ran thus: They were ready to withdraw any such articles as could be proved unjustifiable by the Holy Scriptures; but, on the other hand, if they should discover from Holy Writ that there were other injustices committed against God and man, they would make supplementary claims for the redress of such wrongs.

In obedience to the 'Divine Word' and to 'divine justice' the political and social conditions of the land were to be remodelled.

Two schemes of reform, drawn up respectively by the Franconian peasants and by Michael Geismayr, chief leader of the Tyrolese insurgents, were specially significant in this respect—1, 'The Ordinances and Reforms for the Benefit, Religion, and Welfare of all Christian Brethren,' by means of which a Parliament of the People at Heilbronn was to call into existence an entirely new imperial constitution; 2, the '*Landesordnung*,' a scheme for the Tyrol.

The first of these, which was based on the so-called Reformation of the Emperor Frederick III.,[2] had for

[1] See our statements, vol. i. pp. 321, 322 (English translation), vol. i. pp. 308, 309 of German original (15th and 16th ed.)

[2] See above, p. 203 (vol. ii. of German original)—English translation, vol. iii. p. 221.

aim, under apparently moderate pretensions, the establishment of a democratic socialistic republic with a ruler bearing the name of Emperor.

This scheme contained twelve articles. The first related to the reform of the ecclesiastical class; the second, to the reform of the princes and nobility; the third, to the reform of the towns and communities; the fourth, to the Roman doctors of law and the Roman code; the fifth, to the position of the clergy in the State; the sixth, to the abolition of all existing privileges and to a reform of the whole system of judicature; the seventh, to indirect taxation; the eighth, to the freedom and security of the streets; the ninth, to direct taxation; the tenth, to the improvement of the currency; the eleventh, to a general standard of weights and measures; the twelfth, to trade rights.

The reform of the clergy, according to the stipulations of Articles 1 and 5, was to be on the following lines: 'They were to be maintained, irrespective of birth and position, in a suitable and reasonable way, and the superfluity of their goods was to be applied to the relief of the destitute poor and for the common benefit. Each parish was to have the right of appointing and deposing its own spiritual shepherds, who were to "feed the sheep with the Word of God as it stood in the Bible." No one in holy orders, whether of high or low degree, was to take part in the imperial council, or in the councils of secular princes, lords, or commoners. All ecclesiastical property was to be secularised, and the territorial sovereignty and political rights of ecclesiastical princes were to be abolished.' It was obvious that proposals of this sort were made with a view to

winning over the secular princes and lords to the new 'ordinances and Reformation.'

The secular princes and lords were, apparently, to retain their existing position, and only be reformed so far 'that the poor man might not be too heavily oppressed by them, in opposition to Christian freedom.' But the demands of the ensuing articles were calculated to bring down the princes and the nobles to the status of mere landowners on a larger or smaller scale, or of mere officials. For, according to these articles, they were to lose their judicial authority, their currency rights, their rights in the mines; in fact, nearly all their feudal prerogatives, and at the same time the chief source of their incomes—namely, the proceeds of direct and indirect taxes. In lieu of the feofs bestowed on them by the Emperor and the Empire they were to be 'provided for' by the community—that is, they were to receive salaries in accordance with their birth; thus, instead of the independent hereditary rights and prestige they had hitherto enjoyed, they were to be recipients of definite incomes —which, of course, were to be supplied from the proceeds of the Church property.

The towns and communities were to be 'confirmed in all natural and divine rights,' and nobody was to be allowed 'to introduce, in opposition to the new reformation, any human device, old or new, so that selfishness and tyranny might be suppressed, the poor helped equally with the rich, and fraternal unity maintained.' According to these regulations there would henceforth have been no more question of patricians in the towns.

All doctors of law were to be abolished, both in the courts of justice and in the councils. 'Because the doctors are not hereditary servitors of justice, but only paid

officials, who for their own profit's sake drag on cases and are slow in counselling and serving, therefore they are not to sit on any tribunal, to express or pronounce a judgment. They often keep lawsuits hanging on for as much as ten years, for their own benefit; wherefore they should be called stepfathers and not true progenitors of justice.' Only in the universities, for the purpose of teaching law, were a few Roman jurists to be tolerated.

Nevertheless, not only was the Roman code to be abolished, but the whole existing system of legislation was to be swept away. 'It were well,' so the article runs, 'if all the secular laws which have hitherto been in use in the Empire were altogether done away with, and superseded by the natural and the divine laws; by this means the poor would have as easy access to justice as the highest and the richest.' At the head of the new legislative institutions which were to be established would stand the *Kammergericht*, of whose sixteen members two were to be chosen by the princes, two by the nobles, two by the knights, three by the free imperial cities, three by the cities which were under the rule of princes, and four by all the communities. Under the *Kammergericht* there were to be four *Hofgerichte* (superior courts), under each *Hofgericht* four provincial courts, and under each provincial court four *Freigerichte*. In all those courts there were to be assessors from all classes of society, and there were to be town and village courts in addition. From each separate court appeal might be made to the one above it.

All the indirect taxes that had hitherto been imposed by princes, lords, and towns, all duties, fines, and arbitrary prices, were to be abolished, excepting such as were

recognised to be necessary; and, in like manner, all the direct taxes; once in ten years only a tax was to be paid to the Emperor. Further, 'in all streets in the Empire there was to be free traffic; nobody was to be forced to pay tolls.' 'In whatever prince's or lord's dominion any person is injured or robbed of anything belonging to him the sovereign lord or prince is to refund the whole amount' Also 'all mines containing gold, silver, quicksilver, copper, lead, &c., are, without exception, to be free; all gold, silver, lead, and copper that is discovered, to be received and bought at a fixed price by the Treasury. It would be well, if possible, that there should be only one coinage in the realm. If twenty, or one-and-twenty, mints were established for the whole Empire, it would be enough.' 'The coiners must be bound over on oath, under pain of being burnt to death, to coin the same fineness and weight in silver and gold throughout the whole Empire, so that the poor man may not be defrauded in his coins.'

'The great disadvantage under which the poor labour in buying and selling must be considered, and one standard of measures and weights must be established for the whole country.'

The great trading associations, which injure and oppress both the rich and the poor by their arbitrary regulation of prices, must all be suppressed. Neither an individual nor a company must henceforth be allowed to invest more than 10,000 florins in any business. Whoever has more than this sum invested in business shall forfeit the whole of the capital fund, and half of any excess over 10,000 florins to the Treasury. Every merchant who has a capital of over 10,000 florins may,

according to the needs of other people, advance or lend them money or 'evangelically help them;' he may deposit the money with the town council at an interest of 4 per cent., and the council may lend it out to the poorer burghers at 5 per cent., to enable them to carry on business more satisfactorily.

Among the great merchant dealers, the 'great swells,' some regulations must be made, in order that the smaller tradespeople may also be able to make a livelihood; the shopkeepers in the towns who sell miscellaneous goods must only be allowed to deal in one commodity. All shopkeepers are to receive fresh orders as to how they are to sell each article of trade, so that buyers may know how to regulate their shopping and that the general good may be advanced. In conclusion it is enjoined that 'all leagues of princes, lords, and cities must be put an end to, and only the Emperor's protection and safeguards be retained, without any escort fees or other burdens.'

All existing regulations in this respect are to be dead letters, and none of them to be revived under penalty of forfeiting all liberties, fiefs, and prerogatives. All inhabitants of the Empire, and strangers also from foreign kingdoms, are to be enabled to move about in freedom and security, either on horseback, in carriages, by water, or on foot, and not to be compelled to pay toll, or escort money, or any other taxes, whether of body or of property, so that the poor man and the common good may not be harassed and impeded.[1]

Proposals of all sorts for a new 'imperial constitution' on the above lines were also put forward by Friedrich Weygandt, the vineyard-steward of the Elector of

[1] See Oechsle, pp. 283–292; Walcher und Bodent, pp. 302–312; Bensen, pp. 551–558; Lorenz Fries, i. 434–440.

Mayence, at Mittenberg on the Maine. This man also described the means by which the new organisation was to be got into working order, and 'the war and struggles undertaken for the sake of the evangelical godly reformation be thus brought to a successful termination.' 'If justice,' he said, 'and the Word of God are kept in view, nobody will be able to defeat us.'

It was above all necessary to the end in view that 'all spiritual princes, and their vassals and retainers, should be brought to agree to the twelve articles of the league and the alliance of the general body of burghers and peasants.' As soon as this union had been accomplished 'the secular princes, the counts, and the knights must also be induced to join the reformation league,' and, finally, all the free cities must be brought round; the latter, in his opinion, would not make much resistance. Pious, honourable, highly learned, and clever people must consult together over the different articles, and confirm and rectify them 'on the authority of divine and natural right.'

'Any prince or lord who should hereafter fail to fulfil the conditions of the league, and should forget his seal and promise, would be put to death, so that the remaining brethren might abide in peace and tranquillity. In this way the matter would be brought to a good ending.'[1]

The 'Landesordnung' of Michael Geismayr contained claims of a much more socialistic nature than the 'Ordnung und Reformation' of the Franconian

[1] See Oechsle, pp. 156–162. The document sent by Weygandt to Wendel Hipler, in which he appends to his first proposals his plan of operations, is dated from Mittenberg, Thursday after Cantate, May 18, 1525. See Stälin, iv. 297, note 3, and Kluckhohn, at the passage referred to.

peasantry. It insisted, in the very spirit of Hussitism, on the root-and-branch destruction of 'all godless persons, who do violence to the eternal Word of God, oppress the common people, and hinder the general welfare of the community,' or, in other words, it proposed a war of extermination against all those who would not conform to the new ordinances.

The Word of God was to be preached 'truly and faithfully all over the Empire, and all sophistry and legal trickery to be rooted out, all sophistical books of law to be burnt. In the place where the seat of government was, a high school or university should be established, in which only the pure Word of God should be taught. And there must always be three learned men from this university, skilled in the Word of God and the Holy Scriptures (from which alone the righteousness of God can be taught), chosen as members of the government, who should direct and pronounce judgment on all matters according to the commandments of God.'

With regard to clerical affairs, the following demands were imperiously made by the 'new Christian statutes' which were to reorganise all the conditions of life 'in all points according to the holy Word of God:' abolition of all pictures, images, and chapels; the abolition of the mass, which is an offence before God and wholly unchristian; the removal from all churches and houses of God of all chalices and other treasures, which were to be used instead for the public need; the transformation of all cloisters, and all domiciles of the Teutonic knights into hospitals and benevolent institutions. In every parish there was to be one pastor, who should proclaim the Word of God according to the

teaching of St. Paul; and this pastor should receive for maintenance one part of the tithes, while the remainder should be used for the poor.

The poor were to be provided not only with food and drink, but with clothing and all other necessaries, and for this purpose each member of the community was, in addition to the tithes, to contribute conscientiously the needful alms. 'And if the funds thus collected did not suffice the deficiency must be made up out of the revenue.'

In worldly matters the 'Christian Statutes' demanded complete freedom and equality for all classes and individuals. All privileges must be set aside, because they were opposed to the Word of God and were violations of Divine justice, according to which no one individual was to be more privileged than others. 'All walls enclosing cities, and all castles and fortresses in the country must be pulled down, and henceforth there must be no more towns, but only villages.' For there must be no difference between men; none must be higher or more important than another, for out of such distinctions there arise dissensions, pride, and sedition; but there must be perfect equality throughout the land.'

As regards rents 'the whole province must in each case consult together and decide whether these shall be at once abolished, or whether a "free year" shall be established, according to the law of God, and the rents meanwhile be collected for the general needs of the province.' All taxes in the land are to be abolished, but one customs-duty levied, 'not on commodities imported into the country, but on everything exported.' 'All smelting-houses and mines belonging to the

nobility, and to foreign merchants and companies, must be converted into common property of the country, because the present owners have forfeited their proprietorship by usurious practices. The collective mining-works must be managed by one principal director, with a view to the general good. One good, substantial coin was to be struck; all existing coins must be done away with, and no more foreign ones allowed in use.'

Further, 'no one in the country must engage in commerce, so that nobody may be tempted to the sin of excessive profit-making. But in order that such a regulation should not occasion want, and that business may be well regulated, and nobody overcharged or deceived, but everything be sold at good and fair prices, some place in the country shall at the first be fixed upon (Trient, for instance, on account of its convenient central position) where all handiwork shall be executed, and materials manufactured.' Silk, cloth, and other stuffs, also shoes, shall be made there under the supervision of an official, and the shops shall be set up in appointed places in the country, where everything shall be sold. But no gain or profit is to be made by the goods; 'only the cost price is to be put upon them.' By these means all fraud and trickery would be prevented, and everything would be sold at its proper value, and money would remain in the country, and the common people would be greatly benefited. The superintendent of trade and his officials would have a fixed salary paid to them.'

All these matters, as well as the improvement of cattle-breeding, agriculture, and mining, the preservation of land- and water-ways, and the defence of the

country, were to be under the management of a central government, the members of which should be elected from the people, and which should have its seat at Brixen, where also the above-mentioned university must be established.

'The administration of justice shall be managed entirely by the people. Each community shall elect yearly one judge and eight jurors, who shall constitute the tribunal. The court shall sit every Monday; no lawsuit shall be allowed to extend over more than two sittings. The judges, the jurors, the advocates, the court officials and messengers, shall not be allowed to take gratuities from anybody, but shall receive fixed salaries, in return for which they shall be bound to attend the sessions every Monday.'[1]

The abolition of all class distinctions and the establishment of perfect equality among men, such as Geismayr insisted on, and the conversion of the whole Empire into a republic, under a leader with the title of emperor, according to the programme of the Franconian peasants, were also demanded in an anonymous appeal 'to the assembly of the common peasantry of Southern Germany, from their Highland Brethren.' This manifesto is one of the most violently revolutionary documents that ever appeared in Germany; with reiterated appeals to the Word of God, it goaded the people on to the sanguinary extermination of all princes and nobles.

'Whosoever among the princes and lords devise and impose fresh laws and burdens, for the sake of their own selfish interest, are traitors to their trusts and act

[1] This is the *Landesordnung* which Michel Geismayr made in January 1526. See Bucholz, *Urkundenband*, pp. 651–655.

falsely by God Almighty, their own sovereign Lord. What right has this crowd of financial man-wolves and behemoths to pile ever new burdens on the poor people? This year it is a willingly accepted *corvée*, which next year is exacted as obligatory forced labour; for this, indeed, is how their ancient traditional justice has for the most part grown up. In what statute-book has the Lord God given them such power that we poor fellows should, in fine weather, labour for nothing on their farms, and in rainy weather see the fruit of our bloody sweat perish in the fields? God in his mercy will surely not tolerate this cruel Babylonish captivity, that we poor creatures should be driven like slaves to mow and hoe their meadows, to plough their fields, to sow the flax in them and then pull it up again, to ripple, ret, break, wash, and spin it. . . . God help us! where has such misery ever been heard of? How about the sporting-folk, the gamblers and the revellers, who stuff themselves fuller than vomiting dogs? And for all this we have to pay them taxes, tithes, and rent, and they don't care a hang if the poor man has to go without his bread and salt and lard, and his wife and poor little untaught children too. How about the labourers and their privileges? Yea, cursed be these robbers and cormorants. What are they about, these tyrants and extortioners, who themselves appropriate the taxes, tolls, and money they have squeezed out of us, and turn to such scandalous, abominable uses what ought to go into the general treasury and serve for the good of the country? And as to resistance, let no one dare to breathe a murmur against it all, or he will be popped on the block, and beheaded and quartered, like a rascal guilty of treason; he will find less pity than a raging mad

dog. Has God indeed given them such power? In what chapter is it then written? Yes, their power is from God, but only inasmuch as they are the Devil's mercenaries and Satan is their captain. Yea, they are verily avowed enemies of their own country. What about those who claim a right of property over the bodies of others? Accursed be their unchristian, heathenish practices! What martyrs do they not make of us poor people! Our souls are in bondage to the spiritual lords, and our bodies to the secular ones.'

But the day of the tyrants was over, said this manifesto, and the 'day of grace has come' (Luke xix.) 'Go to now, this is the power of God. To throw down from their seats these Moabs, Agags, Ahabs, Phalarises, and Neros will be truly well-pleasing unto the Lord. Go to, go to! maybe the cries of those who have reaped, and the piteous cry of the labourers, have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and he has graciously inclined unto them; go to, ye 'who have lived in pleasure on the earth and been wanton, and have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter' (James v.)

'But that a province or a community has the right to depose its wicked overlords, I will prove by thirteen sayings out of the divine jurisprudence, which the hellish Porte, with all its whole crew of knights, cannot upset.'

'But if they say, such deposition of those in power is the business of the Emperor and not of the subjects, they are a pack of geese. What if emperors and kings too were found useless? Dwells it not in the memory of man that even kings and emperors have been overthrown by their subjects?'

In justification of the revolution this unknown author appeals to Elias and Moses, who also stirred up a 'poor Conrad' against Pharaoh, and even to Christ himself. 'Don't let yourselves be fooled,' he exclaims; 'tradition here, tradition there, let's have no more of tradition—we want justice; a thousand years of wrong do not make one hour of right.'

All hereditary authority was prejudicial to the common welfare; rulers must be elected by the people for a definite period only.

'If we peruse Scripture carefully and estimate its narratives rightly, we find verily an inexpressible tale of gruesome misery and suffering which have all been caused by personal hereditary might. And what are we to think of the tyrannical deeds of the past? And what, indeed, is more iniquitous than that now, in these times of avarice and pomp, contrary to the pure Word of God, we are so wickedly crushed and tyrannised over with towers and castles and other such plagues of overbearing power and behaviour, and whatever the godless, wicked, inherited "right" is pleased to torment its vassals with? When the Romans ruled with a plebeian government of guild-masters and councils, the might of their great empire increased daily and dominated the whole world; but when ambition tempted and incited them to break with the popular form of government, and they began to set up sovereigns as lords in their own right, then all their disasters began, and their empire was destroyed through the avarice, haughtiness, and magnificence of these emperors whom they had set up.' 'From the first emperor, Julius Cæsar, to the great Charlemagne, there were seventy-six Roman emperors, of whom

thirty-four were horribly and lamentably put to death, all on account of their own tyranny: some strangled, some beheaded, and some burnt.' 'In *summa*, as soon as the Romans changed from communal government to government by emperors, so soon did all their misery begin, till they who before had ruled the whole world with their might came down to be poor bond-people. This I say here, because all these great lords boast nowadays of inheriting their ancient exalted titles from Rome. Yes, they boast of an ancient pagan inheritance, and do not consider that we all come down from God, and not one of us is older by one minute, even in his descent, than another, be he king or herdsman.' The history of the Israelites is also adduced as proof of the rights of the socialist cause, and to show 'that hereditary despotic government invariably degenerates into rank idolatry.' 'When the chosen race of God's people, the Israelites, had a democratic government, and no king over them, then God dwelt verily among them; they were wisely ruled, and they lived righteously. But when heathen greed devoured them and drove them to set up a mighty king to rule over them, when they asked the prophet Samuel to intercede with God to give them a king, then, as it is written and clearly shown in the second chapter of Samuel, God was sorely displeased with them, and foretold to them great misery and lamentation, with slavery and other punishments, which would come upon them from the violence of hereditary rulers.'

In a separate section, headed 'Tröstliche Ermahnung an die christlichen Brüder' (Comfortable Admonitions to the Christian Brothers), the author gives the insur-

gents special advice for their private benefit. 'They must be careful to keep good order and discipline among themselves and to choose good leaders. Over every ten of them there should be a "Rottmeister" (captain of a band), over ten "Rottmeisters" a centurion, over ten centurions a general, over ten generals a field-marshal, and over ten field-marshals one prince.' They must frequently hold councils together, 'for nothing unites and keeps the masses so firmly and heartily together.' Nobody, 'without urgent need,' must stain his hands with the goods of others; 'if, however, any one should proceed to violence with you, and be unwilling to desist, you must leave the matter to the ordering of God, and let happen what will.' They must not grow faint-hearted in their undertaking, but must let the example of Switzerland encourage them to brave perseverance. 'And, not to speak of ancient history, what great, unutterable deeds of valour have oftentimes been enacted by that poor little handful of peasants, your neighbours the Swiss! How often have they been defeated with great boasting and swaggering over our wine bottles, when every German killed at least three Swissmen; or swore that they would put them to the rout with shepherds and sextons only![1] And for all this swagger it was we ourselves who were generally put to flight, and king, emperor, princes, and nobles became a laughing-stock, however mightily they were equipped. So that without doubt everything happens through the power and providence of God; or else how could this confederacy have grown up thus from only three simple

[1] Shepherds and sextons were the only laymen in Germany who were not allowed to carry arms.

peasant men, and go on increasing daily, as it does, because there is no relenting on their part; and, on account of their tyranny and despotism, the rulers will have no rest till, perhaps, the prophecy and the old proverb are fulfilled that a cow shall stand on the Schwanenberg,[1] in the land of Franconia, and shall look and low there till it is heard in the middle of Switzerland. Verily it seems not unlike a joke. In like manner might the saying be fulfilled: "*Und wer meret Schweytz, denn der Herren Geytz?*"'[2]

The insurgents were not to give heed to any proposals for peace or amicable compromises. 'Hear me, ye beloved brethren: so greatly have ye embittered the hearts of your overlords with gall, that they can never be made sweet. Thus all reconciliation is at an end. The lords and rulers do not want to be conciliated; they want to be tyrants; yea, they want to be gods. It has been prophesied of them: "They will stand up against God and his Son"' (Psalm ii.)

If the insurgents were to let themselves in for negotiations with the ruling classes, woe upon woe and gruesome horrors would come upon them. 'Woe and lamentation to your children! what a stepfather's inheritance you will leave to those who come after you!'

'Go to, you would have to serve with pickaxe, hoe, and horse, and your children, after you, would have to draw the plough themselves. If hitherto you have been able to enclose your possessions and keep them safe from intrusion, you would then have to let them stand

[1] Schwanenberg, near Iphosen, in the bishopric of Würzburg.

[2] 'What does more to increase the power of Switzerland than the greed of the nobles?'

open and unprotected. If before they have put your eyes out, hereafter they will spit upon you. If hitherto you have given heriot dues, if you have been bond-servants, henceforth you will be downright slaves, and have nothing that you can call your own, whether your bodies or your goods and chattels; everything will be sold away from you, in Turkish fashion—your cattle, your horses, your oxen. If one of you makes but a murmur against this oppression, the only result of it will be torture, coercion, and persecution. And there will be no measure in the fury and ill-usage; it will be "Off with the traitor to the nearest tower!" Torture will be laid upon torture; you will be scourged with rods, baked in the oven; your fingers will be chopped off, your tongues torn out; you will be hanged, beheaded, and quartered.'

But the author comforts himself with the assurance that the insurgents will not let themselves be drawn into negotiations and treaties, and he concludes with hurling at the princes and lords the following words of derision: '*Hierumb tummel dich, und kurzum, du must rum, und sähest noch so krumm.*' ('So then, mind what you're about; for you'll have to come round, whether you like it or not.')[1]

[1] The title runs: 'An die versamlung gemayner Pawerschaft, so in hochdeutscher Nation und vil anderer Ort, mit empörung und uffrur entstanden, &c. &c., ob ir empörung billicher oder unbillicher gestalt geschehe, und was sie der Oberkait schuldig oder nicht schuldig seind, &c. &c., gegründet aus der h Gottlichen geschrift, von Oberlendischen mitbrüdern gutter maynung aussgangen und beschrieben.' Four quarto sheets, without place or year, and without the name of the author. Strobel (*Beiträge*, ii. p. 45) supposes the document, 'judging from the type,' to have been printed at Nuremberg. Zimmermann (ii. 115) ascribes it 'without hesitation to Münzer, or at any rate to his circle.' But Jarcke (*Studien und Skizzen*, p. 310) remarks with justice that it

But, besides its socialistic and communistic tendency, and its anarchical intentions of overthrowing all existing secular institutions, this revolution had from the first assumed the character of a religious war.

'He knew,' said Caspar Nützel, Nuremberg councillor and treasurer, 'that large bands of peasants were mustered (and their numbers increased day after day) in order to defend the Word of God with their swords, and to stand up for the holy evangel.' 'The spirit of God,' he said, 'was impelling them to the work, and must have its way, regardless of all false ceremonies.' This was plainly manifested in this 'people's army of fifty thousand men, which increased daily, and drew towns also to its numbers, and whose one object was to put an end to sects, and to establish the Gospel on a Christian footing.' These same people had already for a long time been burning and plundering cloisters and churches in many districts, but this seemed a matter of indifference to the treasurer: to him, as to countless others of the propertied classes, it had not yet become patent that the insurgent proletariat, while appealing to the 'evangel and brotherly love,' had an eye also to sharing in the possessions of the wealthy; he looked upon this war against the rights and property of the ancient Church as a special mark of Divine grace. 'I cannot think otherwise,' he says concerning the revolutionists, 'than that God is herein visiting us with special favour, and daily showering down

cannot have proceeded from Münzer, 'as the anonymous author appeals to the authority of Luther, against whom Münzer cherished the deepest contempt.' Luther has, personally, nothing to do with the document.

grace and blessings on us.'[1] 'Nowhere do the insurgents make a secret of the fact,' says a letter of April 7, 1525, 'that it is their intention to kill all clerics who will not break with the Church, to destroy all cloisters and bishoprics, and to root the Catholic religion utterly out of the land. It is for this reason that numbers of the princes, nobles, and civic authorities, who are favourable to the doctrines of Luther and other heretics, have not only opposed so little resistance, but, on the contrary, have often supported the insurgents, so long as these confined themselves to rebelling against the clergy and to plundering and destroying cloisters and clergy houses. But things at once took a different turn with them when they realised that it was a question of the abolition of all authority whatever, and the plunder of all owners of property.'[2] 'So long as it appeared that the revolt only concerned monks and priests,' wrote the Lutheran preacher Herolt, 'people winked at it, and did not grudge the clergy this "mark of distinction," for they looked forward to warming themselves at their fires. But it was quite a different matter when it was seen that the "distinction" was not confined to the clergy, that it was not only cloisters and churches that were to be destroyed, and monks and nuns turned out of doors, but that towns and castles also, belonging to secular rulers, were to be attacked, and nobles and magistrates to be completely exterminated.' 'We connived at it all at first,' so the Lutheran Count Wilhelm von Henneberg acknowledges; 'we were well

[1] Von Höfler, *Denkwürdigkeiten der Charitas Pirkheimer*, pp. 42, 57-58. Utterances of this sort justify the suspicions which others of the estates felt towards Nuremberg, as of a town that was playing into the hands of the insurgents. Compare Jörg, pp. 150-155.

[2] In *Trierische Sachen und Briefschaften*, p. 91.

pleased that the storm should fall on the priests and the monks, but we did not know that we were to come in for it also ourselves.'[1] It was, therefore, considered a fortunate thing for the clergy that the insurgents soon turned upon the nobility also; 'otherwise they would all have winked at the proceedings till the clergy were completely extirpated; but it was time for them to bestir themselves when the senseless peasants had pulled down two hundred cloisters and castles.'[2]

The fierce outbreaks of destructiveness against all monuments and signs of the old Church faith, and the indescribable acts of desecration which these insurgents were guilty of, are of themselves sufficient to stamp the revolution as a war of religion. All these horrors were the outcome of the seditious teaching which multitudes of preachers, and secret emissaries, had been for years spreading among the people, of the systematic distribution of libellous and abusive pamphlets. It had been incessantly drummed into the poor people's ears that for centuries past they and their forefathers, through the frauds and diabolical craft of the priests, had not only been deprived of the true Christian teaching of the holy Gospel, but had also suffered in an unrighteous manner from heavy secular oppression, had been made to pay tithes and rents in opposition to God's Word, and had been cunningly lured into complete bondage. The nation had been constantly exhorted to refuse to pay any more taxes or rent, to pull down cloisters and parsonages, and to strangle monks,

[1] Letter of Duke Albrecht of Prussia of February 2, 1526, in the *Anzeiger für Kunde der deutschen Vorzeit*, vii. 113–117.

[2] Knebel's 'Donauwörther Chronik,' in Baumann, *Quellen*, p. 270. See also the remarks of the Venetian ambassador Tiepolo, in Albèri, *Relazioni*, ser. 1, vol. i. pp. 121–122.

nuns, and priests as servants of the Devil. Therefore the common people naturally thought, as Archduke Ferdinand informed the Pope, that they were carrying out the will of God by plundering and destroying churches and cloisters, and by scandalous ill-usage of the clergy.[1] The preacher Eberlin of Günzburg had already said in 1521 that 'there would be no end to the trickery of the clergy till the peasants drowned and hanged them all, the bad with the good.' 'Luther himself,' said the writer of a polemical pamphlet, 'had been the first to sound the alarm; he could not clear himself from the blame of the insurrection, even though he had said in writing that the populace must not use any violence against the authorities, and though latterly, in consequence of the bloody deeds of the peasants' war, he had vehemently condemned the proceedings. The common people pay no heed to his protests, but follow whatever pleases them in his writings and preaching.' 'You have said in printed pamphlets,' says this writer to Luther, 'that the people should attack the Pope and the cardinals with all the weapons they can command, and should wash their hands in the blood of the clergy. You have denounced all bishops who will not follow your teaching as servants of the Devil, and you have said that the bishops will be justly punished with a tremendous revolution which will sweep them from off the face of the earth, and that it will be a matter for laughter when it happens. You have said, further, that whoever yields obedience

[1] '. . . persuasionem habent se dei negotium agere in templis, coenobiis, monasteriis diruendis, spoliandisque et misere affligendis sacerdotibus.' Ferdinand to Pope Clement VII., May 20, 1525; contributed by Ehmel in the *Sitzungsberichten* of the Vienna Academy, ii. 28–34.

to the bishops is the Devil's own servant. You have called the cloisters dens of murderers, and inflamed the mob to destroy them.'

Luther could not deny that he had written all this.

Neither could he absolve himself from the accusations of this same writer that 'not only in controversial pamphlets, but also in writings intended for Christian instruction,' he had spoken of the necessity of reducing all the cloisters to ashes.

In his sermons, which had been widely circulated, and had gone through several editions, Luther had said: 'A wholesale destruction of all cloisters and religious institutions would be the best kind of reformation; for they are of no use to Christendom, and can well be spared. What is of no use or profit, and yet does such indescribable evil, and is incapable of being improved, had much better be utterly exterminated.' 'The howling and whining in the cloisters and other religious institutions is perfect mockery and blasphemy of God, and it is high time it was all put a stop to, and that such "grasshoppers," as Amos calls them in his seventh chapter, were destroyed.' The heresy of the doctrine of good works was so wretched and deplorable that 'it would be better that all churches and cloisters all over the world were rooted out and burnt to ashes; it would, indeed, be a less grievous calamity, even if done by some one out of malice, than that a single soul should be seduced into such heresy, and altogether lost. For God has given no commands about churches, but only about souls, which are his real temples.' In order to root out error 'it would be well if, once for all, all churches in the world were turned upside down and made into ordinary houses, and if preaching, worship-

ping, and baptising were carried on under the open sky.' 'The reason why lightning generally strikes churches before all other buildings is that they are more hateful to God than any others, and for this reason, that in no dens of murderers, in no common brothels, does such blasphemy, such murdering of souls, such ruin of religion take place as in churches. . . .' If the clergy did not mend their ways in the manner which he pointed out, then, Luther declared, he should wish that his teaching might be the cause of the destruction of all churches and cloisters—nay, he wished they were already reduced to a heap of ashes.[1]

'The mad, insensate, infuriated populace of towns and villages,' says a contemporary Rhenish writer, 'was free to commit the most inhuman atrocities in the shape of plunder, burning, destruction, murder, and desecration; for it had seemed for a long while as if there were no more rulers or magistrates in the land. All this caused the greatest dissension in matters of the Christian faith, and everybody was worn out, and all were at variance with one another, and all distrusted each other. Some of them were delighted to see that the clergy were being destroyed, and looked upon the priests as servants of Baal; many wanted to have a share in the prosperity of the clergy, and thought, if the venture succeeded, that a good lump would fall to them; many were so terrified that they did not know at all what to do; many were down-hearted because they felt in their consciences that they had imposed burdens enough on the poor man, and that now the punishment of God was overtaking them.' 'The lords and squires,' says the Bernese chronicler Anshelm,

[1] Luther's *Collected Works*, vii. 121, 131, 222–223, 330.

'had turned into timid hares.' 'Now, when the peasants had everywhere collected together like godless swine, and when they saw that everybody, even the loud-bragging peasant-haters and tormentors themselves were in such fear and terror of them that there was nothing but fleeing and supplicating before them, and that even those iron-jawed squires, one of whom would formerly have eaten ten peasants at a bite, were now so cowed that ten of them scarcely dared look at one peasant, they (the peasants) became so overbearing and so triumphant, yea, so mad and insensate, that they began to fling about them lustily, bursting into villages, castles, towns, cloisters, abbeys; storming, ransacking, and burning; emptying casks and cellars, and stopping at no form of devastation. There was great fear and anxiety that no one would escape from these infuriated peasants.'[1] 'Princes and lords,' we read in Herolt's 'Chronicle of Schwäbisch-Hall,' were quite frightened and beside themselves; they did not know what they were to do, or what God meant to bring upon them. It was verily a terrible and extraordinary war.'[2] 'The frantic insurgents ruled everywhere over princes and lords.' 'Since, alas! it has come to this,' wrote Duke George of Saxony to the Landgrave Philip of Hesse, 'that many among us in the Empire will not endure that either the Pope or the Emperor should rule, either in things temporal or things spiritual, but that we think ourselves so clever that we wish to govern them, God is surely punishing us by sending renegade monks and ignorant peasants to be our rulers.'[3] 'The judgment of God has come upon us,'

[1] Anshelm, vi. 269, 283–285.
[2] Herolt, p. 106.
[3] Rommel, ii. 84.

said the Duke in another place, 'and, forasmuch as we have despised the Pope and the Emperor, we are now to be governed by peasants. If God had not roused to resistance many manly hearts, that trusted more in Him than in their own understanding, it would not have happened so often that large numbers were punished by the few.'[1]

The number of combatants who opposed resistance to the masses of insurgents was a very small one indeed.

The governing powers were divided among themselves and 'dispersed;' the imperial institutions were in a state of general dissolution; the propertied classes dallied with the revolutionists in a cowardly and fatal manner.

The Reichsregiment looked on passively for a long time, and then thought only of bringing about an accommodation; and at the first approach of the peasants, its members all fled from Esslingen to Geislingen.

The Suabian League was the only strong and united imperial force, and it was due almost entirely to this league that the plans of the revolutionary factions were shipwrecked.[2] The Emperor himself was a member of the League, but only for the Austrian territories in Suabia and on the Upper Rhine, for the Tyrol, and for the duchy of Würtemberg, which was under Austrian dominion; among the other members were the Elector of Mayence, the Bishops of Würzburg, Eichstädt, and Augsburg, the Dukes of Bavaria, the Landgrave of Hesse, a contingency of prelates, counts,

[1] George's instruction of November 1525, von Höfler, *Denkwürdigkeiten der Charitas Pirkheimer*, lxx–lxxii.

[2] For details see Jörg, pp. 39–40.

lords, and knights, and several free cities in Suabia and Franconia.

The preponderating influence in the League at that time lay with the Dukes of Bavaria, thanks to their able councillor, the Chancellor Leonhard von Eck, who, however pernicious his later action may have been,[1] deserved immense credit during the socialist revolution for his bold and energetic policy. To him, chiefly, was Bavaria indebted for having remained free from religious storms and disturbances, from the horrors of the peasants' war, and the destructive fury of the anarchists; and it was this man also whom Germany had chiefly to thank for the armed resistance of the Suabian League against the insurgents. 'I know well,' he wrote to Duke Wilhelm, 'that my despatches, which I have often sent to your Princely Highness, and in which I have pointed out the poor-spiritedness of all the rulers, may have seemed contemptible to many people, who perhaps would gladly have sown misfortune, or who did not want to fight, or who wished to remain at peace.' The strength, the arms, and the fighting power of the peasants were overestimated; but 'if there were as many thousands more of them, still your Grace must look at the matter in no other way than as if the Turk was at hand, must arm for defence, or else perish, or be driven away.' To show want of spirit was the very way to court destruction or expulsion. The programme of the insurgents was 'to abolish all princes and ruling authorities.' Eck persisted unweariedly in urging 'preparations on a large scale' and the levying of the

[1] Eck's treacherous policy towards the Emperor and the Empire after 1526 is dealt with more fully in the third volume (German original) of this work.

money supplies necessary for carrying on the war. 'The issue of this war,' he wrote, 'depends on our persistence, and on our not sustaining too much loss at the first start.' 'Everything depends on the beginning, and on our opposing resistance in time.' 'I say and I write, by day and by night, that your Graces must be well equipped.' 'Were not the Suabian League in existence, and ready for defence, the whole Roman Empire would inevitably be lost to the German nation.'[1]

It was not from the insurgents only, however, but also from the princes, that the Empire was threatened with the gravest danger. Several of the princes, Catholics as well as those who had taken up the new religion, intent only on the aggrandisement of their own dominions, were keenly on the watch for the ruin of neighbouring territories, and hoping to turn the revolution to their personal advantage. If the Suabian League had not offered, as it did, a ready-made and firm rallying-point, it would have been a hard matter for the loyalists to evolve among them any united plan of action against the revolutionists; the separate territories would have fallen a defenceless prey to the enemy, and the universal ruin of Germany would have ensued.

[1] Jörg, pp. 335–339, 348, 402. See also Neumann's *Zur Geschichte des Bauernkriegs* (Frankfort-on-the-Maine, 1882), p. 19.

CHAPTER IV

COURSE OF THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION

THE chief seat of the war at its commencement was the region of Upper Suabia, bordering on Switzerland and the Tyrol, in and about the county of Stühlingen, which was held as an imperial fief by Count Sigmund von Lupfen. On June 23, 1524, the peasants of Stühlingen collected together, armed themselves, and drew up in front of the castle of Count Sigmund, by whom they were oppressed with socage services, and game and hunting laws. They had resolved, so ran their proclamation, 'No more, henceforth, to render the traditional feudal services; they meant to hunt in the forests, and fish in the waters, and fowl the birds for their own benefit, and to have their share of everything; neither would they pay any more rent or taxes, nor allow delinquents to be put in prison.'[1] At the head of these peasants was Hans Müller of Bulgenbach, a daring and resolute demagogue. 'He was very fluent of speech,' writes the chronicler Andreas Lettsch, 'and far-seeing; his equal in speaking could not be found. All men feared this same Hans Müller. I knew him well also; he was a right proper man and of good height, and he had fought before in France.'[2]

[1] Letter of Count Sigmund von Lupfen, August 25, 1824, in Schreiber's *Bauernkrieg*, i. 15–18.

[2] Mone, ii. 46; see Elben, *Vorderösterreich*, p. 27.

The rebellion of the peasants of Stühlingen was speedily followed by risings in St. Blasien and in the Hegau, where the populace was stirred up by Jost Fritz, a hero of former peasant risings. 'He had a grey beard, and wherever he went he was heard to say that he could not and would not die till the *Bundschuh* had achieved its object.'

In July 1524 there was a tumultuous rising in the Thurgau; some 5,000 of the common people fell upon the Carthusian monastery of Iltengen, near Frauenfeld, plundered it, burnt it to the ground, and pillaged the houses of the priests who dwelt around.[1] 'They acted in such an unchristian manner in the Carthusian monastery,' wrote the Freiburg councillor at Breisgau on August 4, 'that it was beyond all measure.' One of them especially is said to have thrown down the holy sacred elements, and trampled them under foot, saying, 'It's from you that all heresy comes. These are the glorious fruits which proceed from Luther's teaching.'[2]

After vain attempts[3] at an amicable settlement, the Stühlingen peasantry, numbering 800 men, under a red, yellow, and black banner, and led by Hans Müller, marched on August 24 to Waldshut, where the fair was going on, and there concluded a league with the populace to the effect that they would mutually help and protect one another. This alliance was directed against the Austrian Government, which had prohibited the action of the new religionists of Waldshut as well as the rising of the discontented peasants, which it had condemned as the work of 'that

[1] Vert Suter's letter of July 19, 1524, Schreiber, i. 4–5; Elben's *Vorderösterreich*, p. 72 ff.

[2] Schreiber, i. 9.

[3] *Ibid.* i. 7–8, 10–11.

accursed Lutheran sect.' As a matter of fact, however, the revolt of the vassals of St. Blasien in Stühlingen and the Hegau, in the spring and summer of 1524, had, as far as can be proved, no immediate connection with the Lutheran movement. 'All the complaints of these peasants at that time relate solely to the feudal abuses which were then prevalent. There are complaints of hard and numerous socage services, of unjust taxes and tributes, of defective administration of the law, of arbitrary exactions, and of persecution of vassals. Very often the complaints are of the most petty nature, and relate only to local circumstances. It was these abuses, which in truth often gave just cause for complaint, which drove the peasants to revolt.' But the influence of the religious innovations was so far a factor in their revolt that the shattering of the ancient faith in the adjacent towns, and the resistance to what had hitherto been undisputed authority, of necessity encouraged the insubordination of the country population in the neighbourhood.[1]

The peasant insurrection which broke out in the Klettgau in October exhibited from the outset a wholly different character. 'From the very beginning a religious element was involved in it. The reformed town of Zürich seized the opportunity for spreading its doctrines among the Klettgau peasants who were under its protection.'

After the latter had determined to conform to the mandate which the town of Zürich had issued relative to the 'Divine Word,' they began all of a sudden to discover that they were oppressed with all manner of unjust burdens and socage services. They now

[1] Elben's *Vorderösterreich*, p. 154; compare p. 12.

informed the Bailiff Heideck 'that they renounced all labour-services and others too.' In December the whole southern district of the Black Forest was permeated with sedition.[1] In the spring of 1525 the movement assumed everywhere a more and more grave and dangerous character. In April the people of Stühlingen formed among themselves an evangelical brotherhood, which pledged itself 'no longer to yield obedience to their liege lords, and to have no lord over them but the Emperor;' to him they would 'give his due tribute,' but he must not 'extort anything from them;' further, they would destroy all castles and cloisters, and whatever came under the name of church institutions.

All members of the 'evangelical brotherhood' were to pay half a *Batz*[2] weekly, which money was to go to the payment of emissaries sent out to gain adherents all over Suabia, the Rhineland, Franconia, Saxony, and Meissen. In the bishopric of Bamberg demagogue agitators had already before that been preaching to the peasants that it was forbidden to pay tithes.

Hans Müller was chosen as captain of the great Christian fraternity in the Black Forest. He went from place to place, clad in a red cloak, and a red biretta with feathers stuck in it, while a herald, riding in front of him, proclaimed in his name the secular ban against every one who refused to join the League.[3]

In conjunction with Hans Müller, the preacher Balthasar Hubmaier was one of the chief instigators of rebellion in Waldshut. 'He abused Pope, Emperor, and King to the uttermost,' and asked 'who had appointed them to be princes?' 'He began to teach

[1] Elben's *Vorderösterreich*, p. 101 ff., p. 156 ff.

[2] A *Batz* is four *Kreuzers*.

[3] See above, p. 183.

that it was the business of the common people to appoint and depose their rulers, and that they were not bound to pay tithes, rents, dues, and so forth;' and that 'water, fish, wood, fields, pasture, game, and birds were to be at their free service.' He used much abusive language against those who wore gold spurs, 'the great grandees,' and composed satirical songs against the imperial councils. He himself confessed that 'at Waldshut he had preached seditious things against the ruling authorities, things which did not tend to peace, but were opposed to God, to justice, and to his own conscience, and from which ill-will had sprung, and insurrection against rulers, and much bloodshed.' His intention and that of his followers had been to get rid of all the ruling authorities, and to choose their governors from among themselves.[1] 'And truly,' writes Andreas Lettsch, 'if one considers the matter rightly, this same Doctor Balthasar was the originator and instigator of the whole peasant war; for he poured forth such abominable abuse and bad language.'

Closely associated with Hubmaier was Thomas Münzer, who spent the autumn of 1524 in the borough of Griessen, in the Klettgau. During this time, wrote Heinrich Bullinger, he carried on his business diligently in the neighbouring places and in the county of Stühlingen, and 'sowed his poisonous seeds of sedition in the hearts of the peasants.'[2] Münzer himself stated that in the Klettgau and the Hegau, near Basle, he had published several 'articles' or regulations, based on the Gospel, as to how government should be

[1] The Reports by Stern, twelve articles, pp. 68–70.

[2] Bullinger, *Der Wiedertäufer-Ursprung*, Bl. 2 (origin of the Anabaptists).

carried on, and that others had constructed further articles out of these, but that he was not responsible for the disturbances in these places; they were already going on when he arrived there. He proclaimed 'the holy gospel of the impending reign of the millennium,' during which Christendom would be free from all tyrants and would constitute a nation of brothers. 'The great ones of the earth would have to give way to the small ones, and be humbled before them. Ah! if only the poor outcast peasants knew that, it would indeed be profitable to them.'

After having worked for eight weeks in the Klettgau and the Hegau as the prophet of political and religious radicalism, Münzer turned his steps towards Thuringia. He kept up his connection, however, with the South German insurgents, and by his letters incited and inflamed the turbulent people against their sovereign lords and their magistrates. By means of agents he caused tickets to be distributed in these districts, on which were drawings showing the size and circumference of the cannon-balls which had already been cast at Mühlhausen for the use of the insurgents, and in this way he encouraged and stimulated the peasants.[1]

Of quite a different class from Jost Fritz and Hans Müller, and the preachers Hubmaier and Münzer, was another of the chief instigators of the common people, Ulrich von Würtemberg, the 'ruined prince.' As 'duke and hangman' of Würtemberg, he had at an earlier period provoked the insurrection of 'poor Conrad' by his tyrannical rule; after his banishment he posed as the friend of the peasants and signed himself in his

[1] Zimmermann, ii. 86, 113–115; Stern, pp. 35–37; Seidemann, *Thomas Münzer*, pp. 53, 152.

letters to them 'Ulrich the Peasant.'[1] In reality he cherished the hope of recovering his duchy with the help of the populace, with which he had been making common cause for some years past.[2] It was all the same to him, he said, whether it was by 'boot or spur,' with the help of the peasants' *Bundschuhs* or of the knights' spurs, that he recovered his land and his subjects. If once he got Würtemberg back into his possession, he would so thoroughly relieve all rich priests and monks of the burden of their property, that they would be able to go about, like the apostles, with beggars' sacks. The rich tradespeople, too, the fleecers of the people, would get it hot from him, he said, but for those who had helped him loyally to get his dukedom back again, there would be such a goodly portion of the booty that they would be well pleased with him, and under the new evangel they would have a better time than they had ever had before.

Ulrich had been a follower of the new Gospel since 1523, and was 'very zealous to spread it.' And this, he said, was the chief reason why he wanted to recover Würtemberg, because the people of the Austrian dominion, under which the dukedom stood, 'were thwarted and constrained in the one "consolation of consciences," the holy Word of God.' If he was not helped to legitimate reinstatement, he would be compelled and driven, as he had already declared in January 1524[3] to the imperial estates assembled at Nuremberg, 'to have recourse to all other means and ways that were human and possible.'[4] The Lutheran Gospel was to be one of these means. In June 1524, before a

[1] 'Uotz Bur.'
[2] See above, p. 12.
[3] Von Stälin, iv. 234, 261.
[4] Beger, p. 581.

single peasant rising had taken place, Ulrich begged the French king, in whose service and pay he was, 'for substantial support in order that he might enlist partisans against their common enemy, the Emperor, and be ready to let loose at the right moment.' His citadel of Hohentwiel, which he had acquired with French money, he filled with abundant supplies of provisions; he ordered large guns to be manufactured, and worked hard to ingratiate himself with the peasants in the Hegau, in Stühlingen, and in the Black Forest. 'His horsemen were seen trotting backwards and forwards about the Hegau. At the fair at Hilzingen, below Hohentwiel to the west, where the Hegau peasants, reinforced by those of Klettgau, banded together in thousands on October 2, Ulrich's agents were very busy; the Duke was flush of money, they said, and they might at any rate try the game. The magistrate of Freiburg in the Breisgau wrote on October 7 that Ulrich was occupied in organising a *Bundschuh*; the people of Basle had lent him 2,000 gulden.

Towards the end of the year the Strasburg preacher Capito entered into negotiations with Egenolf Röder, of Dreisburg, and others, with a view to raising a loan for Ulrich, to help him to recover his territory.[1]

Many of the knights who had been outlawed after the collapse of the Sickingen confederacy and had fled into Switzerland, now allied themselves with Ulrich. These men, 'destitute of land and goods, and therefore thirsting for sedition and change, were friends of all those who were willing to promote the insurrection; friends and instigators of the populace and the peasants,

[1] Briefe in Schreiber, i. 78, 82, 86, 105.

whom formerly they had persecuted and ruined by robbery and extortion.[1]

Ulrich's intimate associate, the robber-murderer Hans Thomas von Absberg, joined with other Sickingen outlaws, such as Hartmut von Cronberg and Schweikard von Sickingen, to stir up the Bohemians and incite them to march into Bavaria and kindle the fire of rebellion in that country.[2] The most active of Ulrich's agents was the one-time chancellor and assessor of the *Reichsregiment*, Johann von Fuchstein, an adventurer as crafty and unscrupulous as he was highly gifted.[3] In January 1525 he was sent to the French king to obtain further pecuniary aid from the latter. Ulrich wrote to the King that an opportunity had just arisen for mustering a goodly number of people, both foot and horse, in the Black Forest, the Hegau, and the Klettgau, and among them the own vassals of Austria, his and the King's common enemy; but he was hampered for the want of a small sum of money, and he therefore begged His Majesty to advance him 15,000 crowns.[4]

The moment chosen for the outbreak seemed highly favourable to Ulrich, since, in the winter of 1524–25, the Archduke Ferdinand and the Emperor were obliged to employ the best and the largest part of their military forces for the Lombard war against the French king. With the help of the subsidies of the latter Ulrich had gained over, nominally, 50,000 to 60,000 Bohemians, and the latter now held consultations as to the advisability of invading the territory of the Archduke Ferdinand. Ulrich himself collected by degrees thirty-two

[1] See Baader's *Th. v. Absberg*, pp. 150, 157, 160.
[2] *Ibid.* pp. 150, 157, 160.
[3] See above, p. 292, vol. iii. (Eng.) Zimmermann, ii. 46.

companies of all nationalities, chiefly Swiss; on the banners of the French companies there were large white crosses.[1] Schweikard von Sickingen joined him with some hundred mounted soldiers, and the peasant captain Hans Müller with a few hundred peasants; the towns of Solothurn and Basle contributed large contingents; the preacher Johann Geyling, as field chaplain, undertook to inspire the troops with zeal.

While these preparations were going on numbers of peasant risings took place in southern Suabia.

In the Allgau, in the hill-country between Lech and Argen, the new Gospel, up to the end of the year 1524, was held in poor estimation; but after the beginning of the following year numbers of preachers swarmed into that region and taught the peasantry that they had been cruelly oppressed by the rulers with socages, military service, death dues, and suchlike grievances, and therefore they ought to rally together and swear to lend their support to the holy evangel and help to establish it. 'It is not we who have caused the disturbance,' said the tenants of the monastery of Roth, in the Allgau, in all sincerity in an address to the Abbot on February 14, 1525, 'but it all proceeds from the clergy and the learned men, who are now publicly preaching to this effect, and we are hearing ourselves now, what we have long heard by report, that we poor people are everywhere oppressed.' They had heard 'that not only in one place, but in many territories, the poor people were rising in revolt; for it was being said by the highly learned, whom nobody contradicts, that God the Lord had made laws, and that the laws He had made were the right ones; and they are teaching out of the Holy

[1] Kessler, *Sabbata*, i. 364.

Gospel that one man is not higher than another.' 'And further,' they added,' we hear from the wise people in the towns that they agree with the preachers in this matter, and are allowing them to have their own way.'[1] On the same day the peasants of the Oberallgau announced that henceforth they would pay neither interest nor taxes, that they would no longer obey their feudal lords in anything, or indeed have any lords over them.[2]

The rising in the Allgau originated with the peasantry of Kempten, who had long been at variance with their Prince-abbot on account both of real and nominal grievances, and who complained especially that the then abbot, Sebastian von Breitenstein, violated standing agreements. It was the bleacher's servant, Knopf von Luibas, who, according to his own confession, instigated the peasants of Kempten to revolt, and at the same time, with the help of his followers, stirred up the vassals of the Bishop of Augsburg, the Count of Montfort, the Truchsess of Waldburg, and the whole aristocracy of the neighbourhood. The country people of Kempten, who had fixed January 21, 1525, for the commencement of the legal proceedings for settling their differences with the Prince-abbot, now declared that they would not treat with him any more, but would have recourse to arms; they were so strong now that they no longer needed to sue for rights. On February 24, the whole district of the Allgau was ready armed for the defence of the 'Holy Gospel and the Word of God.' The preacher Hans Ul, of Oberdorf, deluded some of the peasants by telling them that the Duke of Saxony was

[1] Jörg, p. 139; Rohling, p. 138.

[2] *Werdensteiner Chronik*, in Baumann, *Quellen*, p. 486.

marching to join them with 60,000 peasants, and was going to help to defend the Gospel.

Simultaneously with the rising of the Allgauers, the peasants on the Lake of Constance and in the Schussenthal began to revolt under the leadership of a ruined merchant, by name Hurlewagen. They assembled, in numbers bordering on 18,000, on the Ried, above Ulm, near Baltringen, and entered into close alliance with the Memmingen preacher, Christopher Schappler, the most zealous agitator of the Upper Suabian district. This man had already declared, in December 1523, that 'the laity of both sexes were now more learned than the miserable godless priests, those wretches who had suppressed the truth for their own selfish motives. The laity could better proclaim the Word of God; hitherto all had been little more than a joke; right and justice would only follow after suffering and lamentation.' He proved to the peasants out of the Bible that tithes had been abolished by the New Testament, and that it was unchristian to demand interest or rent. His most gifted scholar, Sebastian Lotzer, a furrier, preached apostolic communism. 'In the Apostles' time,' he said, 'when the Jews were converted to the faith, they had all things in common, they were good Christians. It would be a good thing if we followed their example.' 'We do not want your possessions,' he added, but the wealthy burghers had sufficient reason to fear that the incensed proletariat would plunder and set fire to their houses, and rob them of all they possessed.[1]

The furrier Lotzer and the leader of the Baltringer peasants, a farrier, succeeded on March 7 in effecting

[1] Rohling, pp. 117–125; Baumann, *Oberschwäbische Bauern*, pp. 23–24.

'a Christian Union' between the Allgauers, the Seebauers, and the Baltringers, with a view to 'the exaltation of the evangel and the execution of divine justice.' In the articles of the League it was decreed among other things 'that all pastors and vicars who refused to preach "the evangel" should be expelled from the country, and their places be filled by others;' retainers of princes and lords were to join the League, or else leave the country with their wives and children; artisans and soldiers going out of the land were not to engage themselves in any way that was in opposition to the union, but, on the contrary, to assume a threatening attitude towards whatever was against it, and in case of need 'return instantly to the Fatherland and help to rescue it;' no more tithes, rents, and dues were to be imposed until the issue was decided. The Suabian League, it said, stipulated only for 'divine right and justice,' and was at the service of everybody, on whom this was binding; they wanted no arbitrator in the matter, the divine Word alone was their judge. The councillors of the Suabian League expected that the 'Christian Union' would forthwith enter into alliance with Ulrich von Würtemberg.[1]

Meanwhile Ulrich, with the companies he had mustered, had started on February 26 for the recovery of Würtemberg. As soon as he had conquered that land he intended to make an inroad into Bavaria, kindle the war-flames there, and revenge himself on the Bavarian dukes, who had taken a most active part in his banishment. He was by no means adequately equipped, but full of hope that, owing to the weakness and

[1] Baumann, *Oberschwäbische Bauern*, pp. 25–38; Cornelius, *Zur Geschichte des Bauernkriegs*, pp. 41–44.

unpopularity of the Austrian regency, he would meet with but slight resistance, and that the people would flock round him as soon as he set foot on Würtemberg soil.[1] 'He takes all that there is to get, and gives nobody anything,' the town of Billingen complained of him in writing on February 28. 'As our information goes, he and his party have little money. In the village of Denkingen he burst into the church and carried off all that was in it. And we have learnt on good authority that he has not more than a hundred horses, and that his confederates, who number only 10,000, are good-for-nothing people without arms; and that there are very few arquebusiers, while many of those there are have no weapons.' On March 2 the town of Billingen sent news that several bands of confederates and peasants were falling away from Ulrich; 'and especially that Hans Müller, the captain of the Stühlingen peasants, had deserted with 150 soldiers, and the deserters said Duke Ulrich had promised them a great deal, but had given them no money, and had none to give.'[2]

Ulrich took possession of a few towns, and advanced towards Stuttgardt; but meanwhile he had been thrown into consternation by the report that his patron and mainstay, the King of France, had been beaten by the imperial troops at the battle of Pavia on

[1] That Ulrich might count on the adherence of the peasants is proved from a neutral source, a letter of the knight Sebastian Schilling to Duke William of Bavaria. 'The peasants,' Schilling writes on February 25, 'will very few of them fight against Duke Ulrich, for they would rather have one lord over them than twenty-four. Much favour and loyalty has been promised them [the twenty-four], but little of it held by. In fine, the peasants are quite unwilling to place any trust or confidence in them.' Jörg, p. 413; Vogt, pp. 40–41.

[2] Schreiber, ii. 15–16.

February 24, and taken prisoner. Only a fortnight before, on February 10, Francis had written to Ulrich that he hoped soon to have some fresh good tidings to send him: now he himself was without any hope. On the news of the terrible defeat of their forces at Pavia the Swiss federal assembly recalled all the Swiss from Ulrich's camp.[1] Already, before the issue of this command, some thousands of the Swiss mercenaries had gone off, on account of not receiving their pay, 'perjured, treacherous scoundrels and deserters,' as Ulrich called them. And now the whole body of them went off at once, and Ulrich was forced to seek safety in flight. On March 17 he found himself back again in Hohentwiel. The army of the League, under the Truchsess George of Waldburg, at Waldsee 'made short work with the insensate man,' and his flight was the greatest boon to the Suabian League, as the latter recovered thereby a free hand to unite all its forces in Upper Suabia against the peasants. Ulrich's insurrection had, however, cost many hundred lives, and much disaster was still to be apprehended from the alliance of the Duke with the populace.[2]

'I will not conceal from your princely grace,' wrote Dr. Nicolas Geyss, episcopal councillor of Würzburg on the Suabian League, from Ulm to the Bishop on March 21, 'that although the Duke of Würtemberg has been put to flight and has gone back to Hohentweil, and his army of Swiss has returned to Switzerland, nevertheless the peasants of Suabia continue in the same state of insurrection, and their numbers do not diminish, but increase daily.'

[1] Baumgarten, ii. 401. [2] See von Stälin, iv. 263–268.

'From Augsburg outwards, between the mountain and the Danube as far as Ulm, and from there between the said mountain and the princedom of Würtemberg as far as to the Lake of Constance, all the peasants and vassals are in a state of sedition and revolt. It is said that the whole land of Würtemberg will support them. The burghers of Augsburg are marching out of the town with trumpets and fifes to join the peasants, and one of the councillors, and other well-known burghers, are not a little apprehensive. News has also reached us that the peasants on the Ries are up, and have gathered on a mountain, and that the peasants of the Margrave are flocking to them in crowds. And with us here at Ulm the clamour about the monks and the priests is just the same as it was about the Jews. What will be the end of it I cannot tell your princely grace. Events follow each other with alarming rapidity, and the troops of the League are out of heart.' [1]

After the 'Christian Union' had been concluded, the Suabian insurgents became more and more 'audacious and vociferous,' and the Twelve Articles which had emanated from Upper Suabia became in a short time the recognised programme of all the South German peasants. 'Printed and sent out into all lands as the true peasants' Gospel,' these Articles penetrated as far as Livonia and Esthonia. The woodcut on the title-page represented the insurgents armed with spears, and a knight on a war-horse in a high-plumed hat at their head, and over the picture, a sacrificial lamb.

The moderate party among the peasants was soon overpowered by the extreme radicals, and voices grew

[1] Lorenz Fries, i. 7–8.

loud in declaring that the peasants must set up a king of their own. On the Danube and in the Burgau, Leipheim was the centre of the movement. After the year 1524 'several coarse laymen and peasants, professing themselves Christians and clerics, had arisen as preachers, baptists, and so forth, and the pastor of Leipheim, Hans Wehe, had begun the work of iconoclasm. He announced from the pulpit 'that he would have no more celebration of the Mass, and that, if it were not antagonistic to brotherly love, he should feel glad to think he had killed as many people as he had read Masses. It was said of him that he had preached to the peasants that they need have no fear, for they were fighting for the holy evangel, and no spear would smite them, no sword would wound them, no cannon-ball would touch them. On March 19, 6,000 rebels of the Mindel- and Kamlachthal organised the notoriously ill-famed 'red gangs.' On March 26 the Baltringers and the Allgauers began the plunder of churches, cloisters, and castles.

The brutality of their proceedings is shown by some of the detailed narratives. In the account, for instance, of the depredation of the monastery and the abbey church of Kempten: 'The congregation of the church and the peasants of Allgau marched there in force and seized all that was in the holy edifice, ate and drank and gorged themselves to excess, and without either godly fear or reverence. Then they destroyed the church and left no nail sticking in the walls. All the jewels and ornaments in the cathedral were torn off, the altars and images were destroyed, and the altar cloths, the chalice, the Mass-books and all other books, the priest's vestments, and everything appertaining to

the service of God, were seized and carried away. They also slew the cattle and the sheep and committed terrible ravages; they sold all the corn in the town, and all domestic furniture, without exception, they seized and took away. All rooms were ransacked, the windows in the cathedral and in all other places were broken, and riotous, unchristian proceedings carried on. And on the holy Good Friday, on April 14, the day which ought to have been kept most sacred, on that day the Devil possessed them entirely. Then they destroyed the Chapel of the Rosary and the vault, tore down the pictures and images, and cut off Our Lady's head. Forbidden though it was, many idle loafers from the town of Kempten came flocking in, and did more mischief even than the peasants. They decapitated all the images of God and our Saviour and his blessed Mother, broke in two the image of the Child in the Virgin's arms, and other dear images of saints they dishonoured, hacked about, threw down and broke in pieces. They emptied out the baptismal font in the church in a most sacrilegious manner, broke in pieces the cover and carried it off; also the sacramental pyx, which had been made at great cost, was quite destroyed. The ciborium also, in which the blessed Sacrament was reserved, would have been blasphemously carried away if a priest had not protected it.'[1]

In St. Blasien, where the insurgents of the Black Forest committed similar, and even worse, atrocities, the altar of the Holy Sacrament was scandalously desecrated. 'There were many holy relics on the altar of the Mass,' we read in the ledger of the monastery, 'which were kept in costly chests studded with precious stones and fastened

[1] Report of the Abbot of Kempten, Baumann, *Acten*, pp. 331-332.

with ivory clasps, and they broke open all these chests, took off the precious stones, and trampled the relics under foot. They dug up the graves of the founders, and some others, to search for treasures; they pulled down the altar of the Sacrament, which was overlaid with precious stones of great cost; they broke open the pyx and destroyed it. . . . They were wading up to their ankles in wine, and they drank so immoderately that they had no reason left, and lay about in corners like brute beasts.'

'The peasants in the Ries,' writes an eye-witness, 'plundered the monastery of Anhausen, and, to put it mildly, wounded the cattle very badly; afterwards they poured out the sacramental wine and carried off the monstrances; then they tore down the image of our dear Holy Mother from the altar, cut off her hands and feet, and beheaded the images of the dear saints; they said we did not want churches any more. They had nearly 200 wagons all filled with rich plunder, which they had taken from the cloisters.'[1]

'But now that the peasants were exulting in being the rulers,' says a chronicler concerning the revolt in the Ries, 'and were well pleased at having become nobles, not one of them would any longer wear a smock-frock or twill breeches; they dressed themselves in white, and had their jackets and hose cut and slashed about everywhere and lined with blue, and they wore large hats with feathers in them. In this way they thought to add to their importance and increase their numbers.'

[1] Jörg, p. 254. See L. Müller, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte des Bauernkrieges,' &c., in the 16th and 17th 'Jahrgang' of the *Zeitschrift des histor. Vereins für Schwaben und Neuburg* (Separatabdruck, Augsburg, 1891).

'Now too they had hopes of the burghers of Nördlingen, that they would give them support. For many of the artisans at Nördlingen were on the side of the peasants and had given them a promise . . . that they would leave the gates open for them and give them firearms.'

From many towns, such as Memmingen, Kempten, Kaufbeuren, Isny, Leutkirch, Biberach, Ulm, the peasants obtained arms and provisions through the help of the commonalties, which had wrested all authority from the hands of the city magnates. Knopf von Quibas, for instance, said at his trial: 'The commonalties of Memmingen and Kempten have greatly strengthened the rebels in their wicked proceedings and incited them to war.' 'The commonalty of Kempten was entirely responsible for the plundering of the neighbouring church.' 'The property stolen from the church at Kempten, and also from the castles, was brought into the town for sale and bought up by the burghers and others.'[1] At Memmingen the insurgent peasants were constantly heard exclaiming: 'Down with the houses of the rich and of the parsons!'[2]

Disbanded *Landsknechts* flocked in shoals to the aid of the peasants, while a large number of those in the service of the Suabian League refused to fight against the rebels. 'We have nearly 4,000 soldiers who refuse to serve against the peasants,' wrote the Bavarian chancellor Leonhard von Eck to his sovereign duke on March 12. 'Nearly 1,500 of our confederate troops,' says an eye-witness, 'went off secretly, for they would not march against the Brothers.[3]

[1] See Jörg, p. 137. [2] Rohling, p. 150 ff.

[3] Jörg, p. 241; Baumann, *Quellen*, pp. 727–728. See also the above-quoted letter of Archduke Ferdinand, p. 490, *n.* 5, of German.

The negotiations which were carried on for a time between the insurgents and the Suabian League were not honourably meant. The League was endeavouring to hold back the peasants till the general of the Suabian confederacy, the Truchsess George von Waldburg, had mustered and organised sufficient forces;[1] the peasants on their side resolved at Memmingen to expel the members of the League, to demolish all cloisters and churches, to root out the aristocracy from the land, and then to live as they pleased on their possessions.

After the end of March the revolution began to spread with overpowering violence over the greater part of North Germany. In Suabia only, nearly 300,000 men are said to have been enrolled in the rebel confederacy.

On April 4, the Truchsess George defeated the peasants near Leipheim, seized and pillaged the town, and had the preacher Wehe with eight of the ringleaders beheaded. Then he marched into Suabia, drove off the flower of the Baltringen army near Wurzach, in a precipitate flight on April 14, and on the following day confronted an army of from 14,000 to 16,000 Allgauers and Seebauers near the monastery of Weingarten. The artillery had already begun firing when the rebels made overtures for negotiations, and on April 22 a treaty was concluded with the Suabian League, to the effect that 'the two bands of the Allgau and Lake of Constance peasants would renounce their membership, withdraw and deliver up the mutual contracts of brotherhood, and swear for the future to have nothing to do with unions and sedition; that they would go back to their homes, restore what they had

[1] Stälin, iv. 270.

robbed and plundered, and pay taxes, rent, and tithes and other rightful tributes to their liege lords; at any rate until a court of arbitration, or the ordinary tribunals, had pronounced otherwise; all ill-will was to be laid aside, and the rulers and the peasants were each to select two or three towns to form the court of arbitration which was to see to the carrying out of the treaty.'[1] There was no mention of punishment for the insurrection.

The Truchsess had consented to terms which were so favourable to the peasants because the army of the Suabian League which he was in command of, although stronger in cavalry, was weaker in infantry than the peasant forces, and he feared that if his army should suffer a defeat, the greater number of the towns would fall to the peasants. Friends of the Suabian League complained that the Truchsess had relied too much on the good faith of the rebels; he ought to have taken away their arms as well as their banners, for as soon as he had turned his back upon them they would forget the articles of the treaty, and begin their risings anew. 'The war is not over,' wrote Leonhard von Eck on April 26; 'indeed, I fear that it is only just about to begin in good earnest.' And indeed, at the very beginning of May, after the departure of George, the Allgauers held a meeting at Eglofs to overthrow the treaty, and they informed the companies on the Lake of Constance that this was their intention. The insurgents revoked all their promises made under seal and letter, and at a meeting at Kempten it was decided not to recognise the treaty, and not to render obedience to any ruling authority. The Allgauers pressed into the service every second man within an area extending to the

[1] Walchner and Bodent, pp. 260–268.

Lake of Constance, and became gradually so strong that there was serious apprehension that the insurrection would gain a footing in the heart of Bavaria.[1]

It was in vain that the Truchsess implored the imperial Stattholder Archduke Ferdinand to come into Suabia, and by his presence help to quiet the rebellion.

Ferdinand was quite incapacitated from helping, for in his hereditary dominions of the Tyrol, of Styria and Carinthia, the people had taken up arms; in the Tyrol, indeed, the Archduke was as it were besieged by his own subjects. 'The dire events,' he wrote to the Truchsess, 'take place everywhere with such rapidity, that one cannot keep pace with them in writing. We are not sure from day to day that they will not fall upon us even here in Innspruck.'

The character of the insurrection was precisely the same 'in the hereditary dominions as elsewhere in the Empire: those who had nothing to lose stirred up sedition and wanted to become wealthy and to have equality in all things; for all were brothers in Christ, as had now been shown forth by the evangel. And looting and robbing and stealing were the order of the day, especially from the clergy and the aristocracy.' George Kirchmair gives the following account in his memoirs of the rising in the Tyrol: 'There arose a gruesome, terrible, and inhuman rebellion of the common peasant folk in this country; I was there at the time, and I saw wondrous things. Certain factious and depraved people had taken upon themselves to rescue by violence from the judge a condemned miscreant who had done damage and had been lawfully sentenced to punishment. This they did on a Wednesday, and on Whit Sunday all

[1] Jörg, pp. 460–475.

the peasants, young and old, flocked together from all the mountains and all the valleys, although they did not know what they were going to do. Then, when a large number of them had collected together in the Mühland meadow-land, in the bend of the river Eisacks, they came to the decision that they would deliver themselves of their complaints. A noble lord, Sigmund Brandisser, warden at Rodenegg, went to the assembled peasants and pointed out to them all the danger, ridicule, damage, trouble, and suffering they would risk thereby. Although they promised him not to begin with insurrection, but to carry their complaints before their sovereign prince, who was then at Innspruck, they did not keep their word, but on Whit Sunday night attacked Brixen, plundered and robbed all the priests, canons, and chaplains, and then marched on the bishop's court and drove away all his councillors and servants with great riot, and in such an inhuman way that it cannot be described. The people of Brixen forgot their duty to the Bishop Sebastian as quickly as the peasants of Neustift forgot theirs to the provost Augustine. *In summa*, nobody thought of duty, loyalty, promises, or anything else. The people of Brixen were one with the peasants. Each division had leaders. These leaders marched with 5,000 men in front of the monastery of Neustift, without any notice, without any reason, and fell upon the church on Friday, May 12, 1525. Of the enormities they were guilty of there, any one might write a whole book. Provost Augustine, a pious man, was driven away and persecuted, and the priests were in such wise insulted, ridiculed, and tortured, that each one must have been ashamed of the priestly name and tokens. This time the peasants did more than 25,000 florins' worth of

damage to the church, in destruction of the building, and in plunder of silver, jewels, furniture, vessels, documents, and books. With what insolence, drunkenness, blasphemy, and profanity the house of God was desecrated on this occasion, nobody can describe. They wanted to burn it also, but God would not suffer that. On the Saturday, May 13, they chose a commander, Michel Geismayr, the son of a journeyman of Sterzing, an evil, ill-conditioned, turbulent fellow, but very crafty withal. After he had been chosen commander, the plundering of priests went on all over the land. No priest in the land, howsoever poor, but had to lose all that belonged to him. Afterwards they fell upon many of the nobility, and ruined many of them, for nobody had time to arm for defence; yea, the Prince-Duke Ferdinand and his august spouse were not safe anywhere. For in the whole country, in the Innthal and on the Etsch, in the towns and among the peasants, there was such commotion, uproar, and yelling, that scarcely any honest man might go across the streets. Robbing, plundering, and pillaging were so universal, that many pious men also were carried away to join in, who afterwards bitterly repented. And yet, to say the truth, with the robbing, plundering, and pillaging, nobody grew rich.'

The following communication was made to the Archbishop of Treves by one of his spies: 'Demagogues from the Tyrolese lands and from Steyer, who wish to stir up rebellion, have been among the peasants of Allgau and Alsace, and, as I am credibly informed, intend to make common cause together. And all hands are against the rulers and the wealthy classes. And there is but one cry of robbing and burning. Therefore let

not your Grace be misled by the Articles which they draw up; for verily their proceedings are very different from their words. The Alsatians are in movement everywhere, wherever one goes.'

In Alsatia the insurrection spread like a firebrand from town to town, from village to village. 'Everything is in a state of uproar with us,' says a letter of the Strassburg preacher, Wolfgang Capito, of April 30; 'for bands of peasants have collected everywhere. They are in possession of most of the towns and some of the citadels. The Papists are in unutterable consternation. The rich tremble for the safety of their treasures, and we ourselves even, in our secure city, are not without anxiety. We preachers, however, strong in the Lord, continue none the less in the free delivery of the Word, and there are very few vestiges of the outward and visible Antichrist left here.'[1]

This general reign of terror was taken advantage of by the new religionists in Strassburg for an iconoclastic riot on behalf of the Gospel.[2] The insurgent peasants also considered themselves so deeply versed in the knowledge of the true Gospel that they challenged abbots and priests to a public disputation at their headquarters, with the accompanying threat to visit with chastisement all cloisters that did not send representatives. In the year 1524, Strassburg had already admitted to the rights of citizenship, burghers and peasants expelled from other

[1] Baum, pp. 313–314; Birck, i. 107–194; Hartfelder, *Strassburg während des Bauernkrieges*, p. 225 ff.

[2] Archduke Ferdinand wrote on May 20, 1525, to Pope Clement VII.: '. . . quae apud Argentinam acta sint, pudet referre; nusquam locorum magis est spreta religio quam illic.' Contributed by Ehmel to *Sitzungsberichte der Wiener Academie der Wissenschaften*, ii. 28–34; Balau, p. 457.

lordships on account of seditiousness; and now the city was on the verge of falling into the hands of the peasants through treachery. It was reported that the magistrate had taken prisoners sixteen burghers 'who had conspired to let the peasant troops into the town, in order to plunder the clergy and the laity.' Elzass-Zabern, the well-fortified residence of the Bishop of Strassburg, opened its gates to the peasants and swore allegiance to the 'Christian League.' 'Everywhere there was fire and robbery, desecration of churches, scandalous destruction of all noble works of art.' In the princely abbey of Maurusmünster, near Zabern, the insurgents, after having ransacked and overturned everything else, set fire to the library; in the Commandery of the Knights of St. John, near Zabern, one waded up to one's knees in the fragments of books and parchments; and the camp of the peasants glittered with chalices, patens, gold and silver church vessels, and altar decorations of all sorts. In Weissenburg one of the burgomasters and many of the town councillors were on the side of the insurgents, most of whom belonged to the guild of vine-growers. The abbey was plundered, the church of St. Stephen's pulled down, whole wagon-loads of books, registers, rent-rolls burnt in the market-place. In a letter of the cathedral chapter heavier complaints were made against the burgomaster and the council than against the peasants.

The leaders of the Alsatian insurgents demanded, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, that each town, each borough, each village, should send every fourth man to the peasants' army, and that whenever an alarm was raised in any one place, the signal bells should be rung all over the country. In their publicly printed

Articles also they went far beyond the stipulations of the 'Twelve chief Articles' of the Suabian peasants. They refused to pay both the greater and the smaller tithes, or to pay any more rent or dues; they insisted on full freedom of rights over all water, forests, and game, and declared they would have no other princes or lords than the ones they chose themselves. 'With the evangel in our hands,' said the insurgents before Oberehenheim, 'all things will be changed; he who is now burgomaster will become nought, and the guild-masters will scarcely be on a level with street-scavengers; the great lords in their castles will be thrown out of the windows, and the peasants will be turned into lords.' [1]

'The peasants in Alsatia are frantic with rapine and incendiarism,' reported the Archbishop of Treves's spy, 'but among the common people in the towns who want to go shares with the rich, there is much more sedition and turbulence even than among the peasant mob. They all yell out in chorus: "We don't only want to seize cloisters and castles, but also to loot and pillage the towns and be great lords in them." They are in alliance with some of the bands in Lorraine and with the great confederation of the Black Forest. The latter have got almost entire possession of the Breisgau, and are set upon conquering Freiburg.'

Freiburg in the Breisgau had been, since the spring of 1525, in the direst need and without any help against the peasants. In the town itself schemes were set on foot, through the manœuvres of a butcher, for entering into a secret understanding with the great centres of insurrection. 'Everything here,' wrote Ulrich Zasius to his

[1] Gyss, *Histoire de la Ville d'Obernai* (Strasbourg, 1866), i. 353.

friend Amerbach, 'is in a state of depression and disquietude for fear of an attack, and not an hour goes by in which we do not dread some catastrophe. Luther, the destroyer of peace, the most pernicious of all two-legged creatures, has thrown the whole of Germany into such a state of frenzy, that we have come to consider it peace and security if we are not slaughtered at every moment. I could write pages on the subject if grief did not paralyse my pen.'[1] On May 21 12,000 peasants advanced on the town, cut off the water from the fountains and the mills, and surprised the garrison of the block-house on the Schlossberg, whence they bombarded the town with culverins; several houses were shattered to the ground, and the dome of the cathedral tower was shivered in pieces. On May 24 the town was forced to surrender, and to enter into a treaty on behalf of the 'proclamation of the holy evangel of divine truth, the maintenance of divine justice, and the redress of the grievances of the poor.' With regard to the cloisters and churches the town councillors were required to promise that 'they would confer with the peasants, their "good friends and co-brothers," as to how to punish, abolish, or otherwise deal with these institutions and share the spoil, as others are doing elsewhere in the towns and provinces.' As a punishment for having afforded protection to the clergy and nobility, the town was compelled to pay three thousand gulden.[2]

'In the treaty with the peasants,' wrote Zasius, 'there is one absurd and laughable clause, as is wont to be the case with these rustics, namely, that the evangel

[1] *Zasii Epist.* p. 97. See also Stintzing, pp. 263–267.
[2] Schreiber, ii. 131–133.

will be protected, or as they put it "administered," as if this had not been done long since by all Christian people.'[1]

Luther, whom Zasius designated as the actual originator of the revolution, had published a pamphlet at the end of April or the beginning of May 1525, in which he repudiated all blame in this respect both for himself and his Gospel: it was his enemies only, the murderers of the prophets, he declared, who had incited the people to rebellion.

He saw plainly, he said, what injury was done to his cause by the manner in which the incendiary and marauding insurgents appealed everywhere to the Gospel and gave themselves out as combatants on its behalf; he feared at the same time the downfall of all secular rule, of all social order, 'the irremediable ruin of the whole German land, if the insurrection continued and gained the upper hand.'

He was, therefore, earnestly set on the extinction of the rebellion and the restoration of peace, but the means by which he sought to attain this end were more calculated to pour fresh oil on the fire.

His pamphlet bore the title 'Ermahnung zum Frieden auf die zwölf Artikel der Bauerschaft in Schwaben.'[2]

'The peasantry,' he says in the introduction, 'who are now collected together in Suabia, have drawn up their complaints against the ruling authorities in twelve

[1] *Zasii Epist.* p. 97.

[2] *Collected Works*, xxiv. 257–286. The peasants had sent Luther the twelve articles, and had placed him at the head of a long list of learned men selected for 'pronouncement of divine justice.' (Readers are referred to vol. ii. p. 519 of the German original for the remainder of this lengthy note concerning Luther as originator of the insurrection.)

articles, and have set about to justify them with certain texts of Scripture, and have sent them forth in print. In this document what has pleased me most is that in the twelfth article they declare themselves willing to accept better instruction whenever it is necessary, and will allow themselves to be directed, in so far as this is done by plain, manifest, and incontrovertible texts of the Scriptures, as indeed it is right and fitting that nobody's conscience should be otherwise instructed and directed than by Holy Writ.' Since then the peasants among those 'who now dispense the divine Scriptures on earth' have mentioned him, and appealed to him, he will, out of brotherly love and duty, he says, impart to them such instruction as they desire.

The first part of the admonition was addressed to the princes, the second to the peasants.

Luther began by drawing attention, as he had done before,[1] to the many gruesome tokens shown forth in heaven and on earth; which pointed to a great disaster and to portentous changes in German lands.[2] 'These portents concern you,' he says in his address to the princes and lords; 'they bode no good to you, and no good will happen to you.' 'Nobody on earth have we to thank for all this anarchy and tumult but you princes and lords, and you especially, you blind bishops and fool-

[1] See above, p. 338, vol. iii. (Eng.)

[2] Melanchthon also in a letter to Camerarius on April 16, 1525, discusses the 'portenta,' and now, under the terror of the peasant war, interprets the Monk-calf differently from Luther's earlier explanation (see above, p. 341, vol. iii. [Eng.]). 'Christus homicidam ab initio fuisse Satanam dixit nec est quod putemus nunc aliud agere, quam ut faces iniiciat et incendium excitet quoquomodo. Huc spectabant portenta, quae nata sunt tam multa proximo anno; vitulo-monachus certe depravationem Lutheranae doctrinae in carnales et perniciosas opiniones significabat. Arcus nocte a me visus in nubibus in Loseri domo significabat haud dubie popularem motum' (*Corp. Reform.* i. 738).

ish priests and monks, who, persisting still in your stiff-neckedness, do not cease to rage and rant at the Holy Gospel '—that is, Luther's Gospel—' although you know well that it is the true one and cannot be gainsaid. In addition to which in your secular government you do nothing but fleece and extort, in order to gratify your pride and your pomp, until the poor man cannot and will not bear it any longer. The sword now hangs over your heads; yet you think you sit so firm in the saddle that nothing will be able to unseat you. But God has ordained that these things are not going to be endured any longer, neither shall your tyranny endure any longer. You must become changed and submit to God's Word '—that is to say, Luther's—' and if you do not yield in a pleasant and willing manner, you will be compelled to by force. If these peasants do not force you into submission, others will have to do so. And even if you slay them all, God will raise up others; for He intends to conquer you, and He will conquer you. It is not peasants, dear lords, who are fighting against you, it is God Himself who is fighting you, visiting your tyranny with his judgment. There are some among you who have said that they will sacrifice land and men to root out the Lutheran doctrine. What think you if you should have become the prophets of your own destiny, and if land and men were already at stake?'

The princes, he said, ought to deal leniently with the peasants. 'If a cartload of hay yields to the weight of a drunken man, how much more should you give up your raging and tyrannising and use reason with the peasants, as you would with a drunken or an erring man! Do not begin to fight with them, for you know not where the matter will end.'

With regard to the twelve articles drawn up by the peasants, he said: 'There are some things among them so just and right that they put your princes to shame before God and the world, and verify the saying in the Psalms that contempt is poured out upon princes.' The first article concerning the preaching of the Gospel and the right to choose their own pastor could not with any semblance of justice be refused to the peasants. 'Although there is an under-current of self-calculation in promising to maintain the said pastors with tithes which do not belong to them, the sum of it nevertheless is, that they want to be allowed to have the Gospel preached to them. To this no rulers can or should object.'

'The other articles, referring to such serious grievances as escheats, taxes, and so forth, were also just and reasonable. For rulers are not appointed in order that they may gratify their own selfish caprices and get profit out of their subjects, but that they may govern for the benefit and best profit of their subjects. Now it is not to be borne any longer that there should be such oppression and tyranny. Of what profit is it that the peasants' acres should yield so many *gulden* in corn and grass, if the rulers only take the more for themselves, and increase their pomp with it more and more, and fling away their substance in eating, drinking, dressing, building, and so forth, as if money were chaff? This pomp and magnificence ought to be reduced and the expenditure stopped, so that the poor man may be able to keep something.'

In the second part of his pamphlet also, in his address to the peasants, whom he styles 'dear Sirs and Brothers,' he repeats again: 'I acknowledge it to be,

alas! only too true that the princes and lords who forbid the Gospel to be preached, and oppress the people so intolerably, have well deserved that God should hurl them from their seats, as men who have sinned deeply against God and their fellows; they have indeed no excuse.'

Such language as this, in the midst of a tumult of fiercely excited passions and raging warfare, did not serve as an olive-branch.

It was in vain that Luther now appealed urgently to the plundering, incendiary peasants to lay down their arms, impressing on them the fact that the wickedness and injustice of the rulers did not justify conspiracy and insurrection; for it was not the business of private individuals to punish evil, but of the secular rulers and magistrates, who bear the sword, as St. Paul and St. Peter say, being ordained of God for the punishment of the wicked. '"If any man takes your cloak, give him your coat also, and if any smite thee on one cheek, turn to him the other also." Hear ye this, ye Christian assemblies? How does your behaviour accord with this rule?'

Misled as they had been by false prophets, they had no right to boast of the Christian name or of Christian right. 'Therefore I say again, I will have nothing to do with your cause, however good and just it may be; but because you are determined to defend it yourselves, and will not endure tyranny and injustice, you may do as you please and may carry out whatever God does not hinder you from. But the Christian name, the Christian name, let that stand unsullied, and do not make it a cloak for your impatient, unpeaceable, unchristian proceedings.'

'Not that I would hereby justify or defend the authorities in their intolerable injustice, which you

suffer from; that they are cruel, and act cruelly, I allow,' but he only wishes 'the rulers to know that they are not struggling against Christians, but against heathens; and you on the other hand to know that you are not fighting against the rulers as Christians, but as heathens.' 'So now your name and title must be that you are people who fight for this reason, that they will not endure injustice or wrong, such as nature assigns: this is the name you must bear, and leave the name of Christ in peace. But if you will not be thus denominated, but insist on keeping the name of Christians, go to, I cannot understand the matter in any other way than as it strikes me, and I must hold you for enemies who want to extinguish or hinder my Gospel.' 'For I see plainly that the devil, as he has not been able to compass my ruin by the means of the Pope, now seeks to destroy and devour me through the blood-thirsty prophets of murder, and the schismatic conspirators that are amongst you. Well, let him devour me; his belly will grow lean enough thereby, I warrant me.'

The 'articles,' which in the first part of his pamphlet he had pronounced to be so just and reasonable in some points, received a very different verdict in the second part. The manner of laying out the tithe money proposed by the peasants was sheer robbery and public felony; the suggestion for abolishing feudal servitude was 'slap against the Gospel.' Rulers and peasants were acting equally in opposition to God and were all objects of the wrath of God. 'For since you are wrong on both sides, and since you each seek to protect and avenge yourselves, you will mutually work your own ruin, and God will thrash one scoundrel by the hand of the other.'

His advice was to the effect that the princes should desist from their tyranny and oppression in order that 'the poor man might gain space and air to live in,' and the peasants should withdraw some articles which aimed two high and asked too much; a committee of nobles and town councillors should attempt to bring about an amicable accommodation. He told the peasants that when they had gained all they wanted, they would end by tearing each other in pieces like wild beasts. He said to the princes: 'You lords have the testimony of the Scriptures and of history against you, how tyrants were punished, and in the heathen poets also it is written that tyrants seldom die a natural death, but are generally assassinated and come to their end through bloodshed. Since, then, it is certain that you have governed tyrannically and cruelly, have prohibited the Gospel, and so grievously oppressed and fleeced the poor man, there is no hope or chance for you, but that you too will perish miserably like your fellow tyrants.'

This complete overthrow of the 'tyrants' was what was contemplated by the rebels all over Germany, but more especially in Franconia, where, according to their programme, 'clergy and nobility, and all arrogant dominion and pomp, were to be utterly destroyed.'

In Franconia the insurrection broke out first among the *Landwehr* (militia) of the free city of Rotenburg on the Tauber.

'On the 24th March,' writes Lorenz Fries, 'the peasants of the Rotenburg militia collected together and encamped at Bretheim, gathered to themselves also the vassals of the adjacent demesnes, and announced their intention and resolve henceforth to have no more lords over them, also to rid themselves of the grievances

with which hitherto the rulers had burdened them—namely, the tithes, taxes, tolls, aids, reliefs, forfeitures, fines, dues, rent, and socage services. They also gave public intimation that 'they would shortly proceed to Würzburg, drive away thence the priests, monks, and nuns, and seize their property.' 'This conspiracy of the Rotenburg peasants became known at once in all the outlying villages and boroughs, and since it was a thing that was well pleasing to the common people, they heard the news with rejoicing, and numbers of them flocked from the neighbouring villages and farms to join those peasants, and to learn about their proceedings; and when they returned home they published the matter abroad, praised and extolled it, and made it seem much greater than it really was. Whereby the excited spirit of the ranting, turbulent people was more and more inflamed and puffed up, so that in many other places they began to think of forming similar conspiracies. Then on Laetare Sunday, the 26th of March, some of the peasants at Oberschipf in the Odenwald assembled together, took a drum and a pole, on which they had stuck a shoe, and marched on Unterschipf. Then the peasants at Unterschipf came to meet them with a crucifix, and they went together into the tavern of the 'Sacred Wine,' where they drank and swilled themselves.'

As the insurgents also invaded the bishopric of Würzburg, the officiating bishop, Conrad von Thüngen, convened his 'noble councillors' to confer with them concerning measures of defence. Some advised that without a moment's delay they should proceed with the utmost severity against the peasants. 'All vassals caught on the way to joining the insurgent peasants

must be punished; but when they could not be caught, all their goods and chattels must be seized, and their wives and children must be sent after them; also the villages of some of the revolting vassals must be burnt down, in order that they might see that their behaviour would not be tolerated. By this means many would without doubt be induced to stay at home who would otherwise join the rebels; many also would go home who at present were among the insurgents, and thus the bands would be daily diminished, so that even if the majority were ill disposed, it would be possible to overcome them. On the other hand there were other councillors who said that the revolt of the vassals was not confined to the bishopric of Würzburg, but that it had spread also to the dioceses of Mayence, Bamberg, and into the palatinate and the margraviate. Now there was no one among the electors and princes of these territories who would proceed to active measures against the peasants; and if their sovereign lord, the bishop, were to be the first to do so, he would subject himself to hatred, animosity, and proscription, not only from the peasants but also from neighbouring lords and princes. Moreover, he had but a small number of men at command. Therefore it was much better to delay a little while until they saw what other neighbouring princes, who also had the fire at their doors, meant to do in this matter.' Assemblies must be convoked and consultations held. 'This opinion was accepted by the bishop.'

'While the authorities,' Fries goes on, 'connived at the peasants' doings to such an extent that they were able to flock hither and thither at their will unhindered, their numbers augmented daily. Their audacity also

increased from day to day. Wherever they went they broke into cloisters, parsonages, warehouses, cellars, and drank and devoured whatever was there. A more drunken, gluttonous, good-for-nothing lot of people have scarcely ever been seen than at the time of this insurrection, so that I scarcely know whether to call these goings on of the peasants a war or a carnival (for the peasants at the time of the carnival were altogether senseless and raging), and if it was to be called a war, whether it should rather be called a peasant war or a vintage war.'

One of the chief centres of revolt was the town of Rotenburg, where multitudes of preachers, both native and foreign, proclaimed the 'new Gospel' to the populace. 'One peasant from the Ries preached all over the town, and drew a large concourse of the common people after him. Everything that told against the ruling powers was especially emphasised . . . all this happened openly, and nobody hindered it.' Among the renegade monks who attacked all spiritual and temporal authority, there stood out prominently a blind Barefoot friar, Hans Schmid, surnamed the Fox, and Johann Deuschlin, preacher at the chapel of Our Lady, who had formerly incited the populace to storm the synagogues and maltreat the Jews. No one, he maintained, was bound to give church-offerings, tithes, or cattle-dues. 'The ill-feeling of the people against the ruling powers grew more and more virulent. Deuschlin's preaching called forth tremendous response, and the citizens even assembled in his house.' Carlstadt also, the fugitive from Saxony, the chief author and instigator of the revolution, had come to Rotenburg. The doctrine of evangelical brotherly love, according to which all things were shared in common, all magis-

trates and rulers were to be done away with, and one individual was to possess as much as another, 'gave immense satisfaction to the common people both in town and country.' Here as everywhere there grew up gradually among the indigent, impoverished, debt-encumbered burghers, the petty nobles of the neighbourhood, and the clever leaders in the villages an influential party bent on 'helping on the Evangel' and on abolishing everything that was opposed to the 'true Word of God.' A certain number of the citizens 'entered into an agreement with the insurgent peasants and undertook to admit them into the town and to assist in the massacre of the Town Council and all the wealthy inhabitants.'

One of the cleverest and most resolute leaders of the revolution party in league with Deuschlin and Carlstadt was the squire Stephan von Menzingen, formerly in the service of Duke Ulrich von Würtemberg, a man of great eloquence, but of a false, double-dealing nature.[1] At his instigation the municipal government was overthrown towards the end of March 1525, and soon afterwards the Catholic Church service was abolished. 'On the 24th of March,' a chronicler relates, 'the Lord God was beheaded on the cross, and his arms cut off;[2] this happened in the churchyard. On Good Friday all the offices in the churches were abolished; only Johann Deuschlin preached; he reviled emperor, king, princes, and lords, both spiritual and secular, and said that they wished to hinder the Word of God. The blind monk called the sacrament idolatry. On Holy Easter

[1] Menzingen is admirably described in Zweifel's *Chronicle*. See also his 'Urgicht,' in Baumann's *Quellen aus Rotenburg*, pp. 596, 598.

[2] This is the literal translation of the German. It means that 'a picture of Christ on the cross was beheaded, and the arms cut off.'

Day they neither sang nor read, and on the following Monday Carlstadt preached against the Sacrament.[1] Carlstadt had already before this encouraged the work of iconoclasm, and now, on Easter Monday, some millers from the Tauberthal, below the town, collected together in bands with their servant men, and stormed the beautiful church of our Holy Virgin at Kobenzell: they broke in the windows, with their glass paintings, desecrated the altars, laid sacrilegious hands on the holy vessels and Mass books, threw the pictures (many of them the works of Michael Wolgemut, Albert Dürer's teacher), with the carved images of saints, into the river. While Carlstadt was inveighing against the Holy Sacrament some of the mob rushed upon the altar in order to destroy the images. 'This outrage, however, was prevented by the pious Catholic Christians, who drove the marauders out of the church by force.' Knives were used on both sides. On the Thursday after Easter the women tore up and down the Hafengasse with halberds, forks, and poles, and made a great screaming, and said they would plunder all the parsonages. Terrible deeds were done. When one of the ringleaders, Lorenz Knoblock, an associate of Menzingen's, who had been chosen as captain by the peasants, was about to commit an assault, he was hewn in pieces by the peasants.' 'They pelted each other with the fragments of his body, and at last they hacked off his head and split it in two.'

In the town of Bamberg another preacher of the 'new Gospel,' Johann Schwanhäuser, inflamed the populace in the same manner against the clergy and encouraged them to revolt. 'Our learned and reverend

[1] Baumann's *Quellen aus Rotenburg*, pp. 596, 598.

spiritual fathers,' thus Schwanhäuser addressed the multitudes from the pulpit, 'preach and declaim publicly from their pulpits to the poor ignorant people, and tell them, in opposition to all Scripture, that men have their own free-wills and can choose between good and evil, and that their salvation rests with themselves. Oh woe, woe, for the great plague and wrath of God upon us! what are these preachers about, that they thus seek to make dissemblers and hypocrites out of men, and to exalt them into gods, who imagine that they can get to heaven with their own works?' 'Our blind leaders say and preach at one moment that the sufferings of Christ are sufficient to redeem many worlds, and the next moment they say they are not enough to redeem even one man, for he must do his own works as well. Furthermore they say that they do not reject grace, but that they lay stress on works as well. Ah, God in heaven, what blasphemy is this? What is chaff by the side of wheat, what is water compared with wine, what are our unholy works to the pure grace of God? If this is not to blaspheme and profane the grace of God, to declare the death and the blood of Christ insufficient, then let some one tell me what is blasphemy and profanation.' The vineyard of the Lord is devastated the most by those very people who are commanded to till it. They drive Christ out of the vineyard and thrust themselves into his place; they say they are the vicars of Christ, and the true ambassadors of God are persecuted by them. But the Lord will come to judgment and will say: 'Ye are they who have laid waste my vineyard, and the plunder of the poor is in your houses.' The Antichrist had already begun to rule in the times of the apostles, and now he was governing with great might. Popes,

cardinals, and bishops were rising up against the Word of God, and were therefore veritable Antichrists; Christ called such teachers thieves and murderers. The living poor were allowed to go without houses, and to suffer cold and hunger, while for the dead saints great houses of stone were built, and adorned with gold and silver and jewels; animals, also, and eatables were brought to them. We rob the living for the sake of the dead who are buried. If we were true Christians, we should sell the monstrances, the chalices, the church and mass vestments, in order that we might be able to help the poor.[1]

By preaching of this sort Schwanhäuser gained multitudes of followers, and on April 11, 1525, the most fanatical of them began an insurrection. They sounded the alarm bell, chose leaders, barricaded the gates, compelled the peaceful citizens as well as the nobles and the clergy to lend their services and to guard the gates; and they sent messengers to the neighbouring villages summoning them also to revolt. By the following day several thousand insurgents had collected together. When Weigand, Bishop of Redwitz, refused to comply with their order to seize all the possessions of the clergy and nobility, because it was not lawful for him to take what belonged to another without the sanction of a magistrate, his palace of Hofburg was completely ransacked. For two whole days the populace from the towns and the country went on plundering the houses of most of the canons and the other clergy. Only the cathedral building, which was protected by loyal citizens, remained intact. On April 15 an agreement was come to by which the bishop, with exclusion of the chapter, was recognised as the sole sovereign of the

[1] Heller, pp. 165, 173–175, 185, 190–193.

district, and a provincial committee appointed for the investigation and redress of all grievances, pending the decision of which rents and tithes were to be in abeyance. Peace was openly proclaimed, but nevertheless the insurrection went on uninterruptedly in the bishopric. More than seventy castles and several cloisters were pillaged and destroyed; the rabble from the whole neighbourhood collected together in the town in numbers amounting to several thousands, 'so that nobody was secure in life or property, when once the mob had intoxicated itself, as was continually happening in the wine-cellars of the clergy. So wild and turbulent did the proceedings become in Bamberg that not only the pious citizens were sore distressed, but also others who at first had been well pleased with the revolt.'[1]

It was owing to the intelligence the insurgents had received of the successful issue of the revolt in the Odenwald, the Neckarthal, and the whole of the bishopric of Würzburg, that they thus disregarded the treaty of April 15.

In the Odenwald and its vicinity the peasants had been instigated to rebellion by George Metzler, a ruined innkeeper from Ballenberg, and Wendel Hipler, surnamed von Fischbach, formerly the Hohenlohischer Chancellor, one of the craftiest and most active of demagogues. 'I have planned some work for your noble lords,' said Hipler on March 23 to a servant of the Count of Hohenlohe, 'which will keep them well employed this year; there will be some meadows round about Oehringen to be bought cheap.' He worked energetically with speech and pen to foment

[1] For fuller details see Bensen, pp. 376–384. The catalogue of castles that were destroyed, pp. 564, 565.

the insurrection, organised secret societies over a wide circumference, and, in short, as Chancellor and chief military clerk of the peasants, held all the threads of the conspiracy in his hands. 'Hipler was a rare man and writer,' said his friend Götz von Berlichingen, 'a man such as one seldom finds in councils.' [1]

At Metzler's instigation they collected in shoals from all quarters. All who refused to come were threatened with loss of property and life, and were informed that they would be made to experience what it was 'not to be a Christian Brother.' When Metzler was chosen as chief captain he marshalled his bands, strengthened by reinforcements from the districts of Mayence and Würzburg and the territory of the Teutonic Knights, to the Cistercian monastery of Schönthal, four leagues from Oehringen. Metzler's troops called themselves 'the evangelical army,' whose object was to 'defend and administer the Word of God.' From April 4 to April 10 the insurgents in the monastery, 'like wild beasts,' desecrated the altars, robbed and divided among them all the gold and silver church vessels, destroyed the most exquisite works of art, and burnt an adjacent village, till only a few houses were left standing.

During this reign of horror there appeared among other 'Christian Brothers' who espoused the peasants' cause the famous robber-knight Götz von Berlichingen.[2] 'He would be able,' he said, 'to bring the nobles to them: for the latter were trodden down by the princes as much as the peasants were.' [3]

[1] Bühler, pp. 155–159.

[2] See our statements, i. (9–12th ed.) 563–566, 571 (13th ed.), 574–577, 582 (15th and 16th ed.), 592–595, 600. (English Translation, iv. 334–338, 344.)

[3] Von Stälin, iv. 296, *n.* 3.

The 'evangelical army' in Schönthal was swelled by bands of peasants from the district of the Tauber, and by others from the earldom of Hohenlohe and the district of the imperial city Heilbronn, under the leadership of the wild incendiary, Jäcklein Rohrbach, from Böckingen. Jäcklein, like Metzler, had been for a long time in fraternal connection with Wendel Hipler, and was fully initiated into the latter's plans. With the help of his rabble host he had forced into the 'Christian Union' all the places within a circumference of several leagues; if they did not come at once to help him and to proclaim the Gospel, he would come and fetch them by force, he threatened, and take from them all their possessions and burn them. 'In this manner,' says Sebastian Franck, 'many upright, honourable men were constrained to join the union.' Jäcklein obliged his adherents to take an oath that they would drive out the monks and priests and divide the church goods among themselves. It was in this sense that a preacher in his camp exhorted the people to protect evangelical freedom!

While the peasants 'rioted and caroused in Schönthal worse than any Turks' news came that the Christian Brothers from the neighbourhood of Mergentheim had been let into the town by the help of the citizens and had pillaged the lodges of the Teutonic Knights.[1] 'Then there was rejoicing among the peasants, that they had good luck everywhere, and they would soon be the only lords in the land.'

The troops moved southward on April 10, under Metzler's command, like 'one united host of the Odenwald and the Neckarwald,' and on the following

[1] See Oechsle, pp. 138–141.

day at Neuenstein and Waldenburg they took captive 'in Christian duty' the Counts Albrecht and Georg von Hohenlohe. To the request of Albrecht that the peasants would be guided by the decision of an impartial umpire, the insurgents answered that they would take no orders either from the emperor or the estates, but would only be guided by the decision of the united band of peasants. If their claims were not acceded to, they would lay waste and ruin all the property of the Counts. The Counts were compelled to promise submission on bended knees and to accept the twelve articles. 'Brother Albrecht and Brother George,' said one of the insurgents, 'come here and swear to stand by the peasants like brothers, and in nothing to oppose them; for you are lords no more, but we are now the lords of Hohenlohe.'[1] After plundering the convent of Lichtenstein on April 12 the insurgents proceeded to Löwenstein, where they forced into their league the Counts Ludwig and Friedrich: they were compelled to accompany the march clad in peasants' garb and carrying white staffs in their hands, and they were exposed to the rudest treatment. On April 14 the little town of Neckarsulm belonging to the Teutonic Knights was seized, and 'all that was ecclesiastical in it plundered,' after which the army advanced against Weinsberg in Würtemberg.

The garrison in Weinsberg, under command of Count Ludwig Helfreich von Helfenstein, numbered only from seventy to eighty mounted soldiers. At the approach of the peasants the Count had begged for reinforcements from the Austrian Government at Stuttgardt, but all in vain. The burghers of the town, moreover, so he wrote,

[1] Herolt, p. 91. See Oechsle, p. 95–100.

in spite of their having taken the oath of 'life and death allegiance,' had laid themselves open to suspicion of disloyalty.

'Ill-disposed, treacherous rascals from Weinsberg had entered into alliance with the peasants, shown them the way by which they could best storm the city, and promised them help when they came.' On Easter morning, April 16, on receipt of the news that by daybreak the peasants were already moving out of their camp and 'intended to carry off the Easter eggs from the people of Weinsberg,' Count Ludwig strengthened the castle garrison and took the necessary precautions for the defence of the gates and the fortification of the town. He assembled his knights and mounted soldiers, and the town militia in the market-place, and spoke words of encouragement to them; he himself, he said, had left his wife and child at the castle, and he would stay with them in the town and do all he could for them; he was sure also that a mounted reinforcement would not fail to come to their succour that very day. Then he repaired to the church with several of his cavalry officers to attend the service of the Mass and to receive the Holy Sacrament. But divine service was not ended, when from 6,000 to 8,000 peasants appeared outside the walls and demanded that the castle and the town be opened to 'united Christian troops.' An old witch, the black 'Hofmännin' from Böckingen, pronounced her spells over the army to make it 'proof against shot and steel.' The savage bands clambered up the castle like wild cats, pillaged it, and shattered it to pieces. With the help of the citizens, who opened one of the gates to the peasants, the town was taken. Knights and horsemen defended themselves from within

the church, but they were all taken prisoners; every one who was 'booted and spurred' was doomed to destruction. The priests, too, were massacred wholesale. 'Laden with monstrances and chalices, silver vessels, silk vestments, and other costly treasures, and besotted with drink, the peasants poured into the town, and then began quarrelling and fighting with each other.' 'It seemed as if hell had let loose its worst fiends. They began perpetrating atrocities so abominable as one seldom finds described.' Jäcklein Rohrbach, who had undertaken the guardianship of the prisoners, was desirous of 'inspiring the nobles with particular horror and fear,' and he and his murderous associates bound themselves together to 'let live no lord, none of the nobility, no mounted officer, but now and hereafter to stab them all. Every peasant who gave quarter to a prisoner was to be himself stabbed to death.' They determined to punish the Count von Helfenstein and about a dozen nobles, besides a few servant-men, by spearing them to death.

They were made to undergo their penalty in a meadow in front of the lower city gate. The Countess von Helfenstein, a natural daughter of the Emperor Maximilian, with her two-year-old son in her arms, threw herself on her knees before Jäcklein, and entreated him, with tears, to spare her husband's life. But they pushed her back, and one of the peasants inflicted a dagger-wound on the 'little lord.' The Count himself, who offered the sum of 30,000 guldens for his life, received for answer: 'If you were to give us two tons of gold, you would still have to die.' The Count's former piper, Melchior Nonnenmacher, of Ilsfeld, walked in front of him and played the cornet lustily. 'I have

often piped for you at table,' he said, 'and now I am playing the right and proper dance tune for you.' He took the plumed hat from off the Count's head and stuck it on his own, with the words: 'You've worn it long enough, it's my turn now to be a Count.' Helfenstein had scarcely taken three steps in the street when, pierced with a hundred spikes, he fell lifeless to the ground. The old black witch thrust her knife into the corpse and smeared her shoes with the fat that oozed out. Jäcklein Rohrbach arrayed himself in the damask waistcoat of the Count and, placing himself in front of the Countess, said, 'Woman, how do you like me in this suit?' The Countess was robbed of her jewels and even part of her clothing, placed on a dung cart with her waiting women, and taken in this way to Heilbronn. The rabble from Weinsberg called out jeeringly after her: 'You came here in a golden chariot, but you're going away in a dung cart!' With calm and collected spirit, remembering the Passion week just gone by, the unhappy woman said: 'I am guilty of many sins; Christ the Lord, who was spotless, entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday amid the Hosannahs of the people, and soon after He was crucified, not for his own sins, but for those of others; let Him comfort me.' [1]

The rest of the nobles [2] were also speared to death; the young squires were hoisted up in the air on spears, and thus put to death.

[1] The Countess took refuge later on with her brother, Bishop George of Lüttich, and her half-sister Margareta, Stattholderess of the Netherlands, where she died in the year 1537. Henne, *Hist. du règne de Charles V en Belgique*, iv. 80.

[2] For the list of the slain, and further details in general of the Weinsberg atrocities, see v. Stälin, iv. 286, *n.* 1–3.

The news of the Weinsberg atrocities rang like a death-cry through the whole of Germany, and there was 'but one feeling of shame and revenge for such inhuman deeds.'

'If we but consider,' says a chronicler, 'the great slaughter and unjust unchristian behaviour that the evangelical peasants were guilty of, we may well ask how they would have governed if their venture had succeeded! Would they not have done even as the Turks, wherever they get the upper hand, and shed lamentably the blood of Christians, young and old? Is not the conduct of the peasants just like that of the Turks?'[1] 'I hope to God,' wrote the Bavarian Chancellor, Leonhard von Eck, on April 19, 'that before long we shall set to work in earnest and pay them back in the same coin; I not only advise this, but am ready, as far as I can, to help with my own hands; for never before in our country were such abominable proceedings heard of.'[2]

In the council of peasants which met to consider further undertakings, it was proposed to burn down and demolish all fortresses; a nobleman was not to have more than one door to his house, like the peasants. All cloisters too, others suggested, must be done away with, and all the monks must be made to hoe and till like other country-people. The majority were in favour of these resolutions, and it was decided to begin by coercing the town of Heilbronn into the 'Christian Fraternity,'

[1] Thoman, 'Weissenhorner Historie,' in Baumann's *Quellen zur Geschichte des Bauernkriegs in Oberschwaben*, p. 90. 'The old and everyday saying does not lie,' says Haarer (in Göbel's *Beiträgen zur Staatsgeschichte von Europa*, p. 115): 'No knife ever cuts so sharply as when a "peasant-noble" becomes lord and master.'

[2] Vogt, *Die bayerische Politik*, p. 435.

and then to advance through the district of Mayence to the bishopric of Würzburg, where the insurrection had at that time gained great force and extent. It was also resolved on April 17 to appoint Götz von Berlichingen as their captain.[1] Already before the departure of the 'evangelical army' from Weinsberg they had received two culverins and a half-hundredweight of powder from the Counts of Hohenlohe, with the assurance that the sovereign lords would not allow any injury to happen to the peasants from their vassals.[2]

The taking of Heilbronn cost the peasants 'as little trouble as the capture of Weinsberg.'

In Heilbronn, after the insurrection had begun in Upper Suabia, a 'brotherhood' had been organised which held its secret meetings in the house of a baker, who carried on a wine trade as well. This 'brotherhood' busied itself in the town and the outlying villages 'in making preparations for the Christian rising.' The twelve articles were put into the hands of the peasants, and one of the conspirators egged them on with the exhortation: 'Set to with a will; you're free men and no longer bound to pay rents, tithes, and dues; courage, men, courage, the vine-growers in the town will not desert you.' 'Brothers,' exclaimed a soldier who had served under Sickingen at the siege of Treves, 'the Bundschuh will begin to stir.' Jäcklein Rohrbach was the most active member of the league. 'Brothers,' he said to the conspirators, 'now we will begin a Christian life and form an army of peasants.' 'We will punish the clergy,' declared another, 'and the patricians also; we will polish off those bloated aristocrats; the vengeance of God shall fall on them; their houses must become

[1] See v. Stälin, iv. 296, *n.* 3. [2] Oechsle, p. 109 110.

ours.' At a gathering at Flein, where the Heilbronn Brothers and eight hundred peasants were assembled, it was resolved at Jäcklein's suggestion to set in operation a 'fraternal fund.' 'Whoever had more than others, must help and advise the others. The house of the Teutonic Knights in Heilbronn must be seized and divided with the community; the meadows given over to the poor, and all the monks and nuns expelled.' By the middle of April nearly the whole guild of vine-growers in Heilbronn had been drawn into the brotherhood, and a powerful party formed against the Town Council. This party included several prosperous workpeople, and also people who had served formerly in the war, no less than members of the proletariat class, whose possessions were made known in an inventory drawn up later on. Of one of them says this inventory, he possessed nothing but a bed and a mattress with a bolster and two pillows, and six children lying on it; of another: 'He has only a table, a little bed, and four children;' of a third: 'The sole property of himself and his four children is an old bed, a can, and a cuirass.' All these people were of opinion that the defence of the Evangel must not be delayed any longer, but that God's justice must be executed and the rich people got rid of. The baker, Hans Müller, nicknamed Flux, who had sought out the peasants in their camp, informed the confederates that the Brothers were advancing in such strength that it would be impossible to overcome them; all their plans were known to him, he said, and they would march all over the world. 'I saw them at the convent of Lichtenstein, how they destroyed and broke to pieces all that was in the place; that's the way to deal with all the monks and nuns, and with the bloated aristocrats

who countenance the monks and nuns we must also proceed in like manner.'

The Town Council of Heilbronn, 'divided among itself and without a head,' soon stood at the service of the insurgents. On Easter Sunday, April 16, matters came to open insurrection in the market-place. The friends of the peasants sent messengers to George Metzler and Jäcklein Rohrbach enjoining them to advance without delay on Heilbronn, and informing them that they would be helped to enter the town. The council was threatened that if it did not admit the peasants their heads would be thrown over the walls. One band burst into the council chamber with the cry, 'Stab the villains to death!' and it was only with great difficulty that the preacher of St. Nicholas, Doctor Lachmann, a friend of Melanchthon, succeeded in quieting the insurgents. When the 'murderous deed of Weinsberg' became known at Heilbronn, 'all the councillors were stricken with terror and consternation.' Immediately after the ghastly deed, citizens of Heilbronn who had had a share in it, or who had happened to be at Weinsberg as envoys of the revolution committee, had come back one by one into Heilbronn. Among them were Christian Weyermann, 'his halberd still bloody, with human hair and flesh sticking to it,' who had said under the gate: 'It's all going well, all that smacks of the spur must die;' Luz Taschenmacher, 'with bloody spear and clad in a court dress of the Count von Helfenstein; Hans Waldner, with the Count's cap and rapier; and also the notorious Schweinheinz of Kresbach, a tremendous rogue, who had first plundered the Count's property and had been greatly minded to strangle him afterwards.'

In Heilbronn also the rabble cried out that the great nobles must be speared to death. 'We are going to do them justice; only wait till our good luck begins. The villains have defrauded us long enough; now their proceedings are coming to light. The peasants will do no harm to any of the poor; it's only the rich they mean to stab. We must chop off the hands of all those who have sworn to fight against the peasants.'

On Easter Tuesday the joint army of peasants appeared before the town 'to dance at the Heilbronn fair.' George Metzler demanded admission. They had come, he sent word to the council, to seek out their enemies the clergy; they must treat the Christian brethren kindly and give them of their best, or they would turn everything topsy-turvy. The council began entering into negotiations, but while they were conferring, the peasants burst into the town, the gates having been opened to them either by command of the council or else by the treachery of insurgent citizens. From this moment the peasants were lords and masters. The populace assembled in the market-place were informed by Jäcklein and others that the peasants had not come out to fight against the Emperor, but to establish the holy Evangel according to the capacity of the Holy Roman Empire.

This 'establishing' began forthwith with the pillaging of the house of the Teutonic Knights. All the letters, accounts, and papers belonging to the Order were torn up and thrown into the stream. Women and children ran hither and thither carrying or dragging after them wine, corn, linen, silver, household furniture of all sorts. Jäcklein set up a market in the town, and had it

announced that all the plunder would be sold there. He sold wine, fruit, and all portable goods. Burgesses of the town were seen standing in the granary of the Commandery doling out corn and other commodities with the town standard weights and measures; women carried off Levitical vestments and choir surplices, and cut up the latter into aprons. The Teutonic Knights were compelled to sit bareheaded by the peasants at table. 'Hoot, young fellow,' called out a peasant to one of the knights, 'we are the Masters of the Order,' and gave him a blow in the ribs which knocked him over. All the money that was found was seized and partitioned. The convent of St. Clara was compelled to give 5,000 gulden; the Carmelite cloister lying outside the town had to pay 3,000 guldens, and was attacked and damaged notwithstanding a formal promise to the contrary. George Metzler, the captain of the troops, had for his share 1,300 gulden; Jäcklein deposited in the house of a widow 71 gold guldens, a roll of double ducats, carnelians set in gold, great silver beakers, silver seals, and other treasures; a citizen of Heilbronn carried off on his back 1,400 guldens, and divided the money among four other rebels.

The town councillors had sacrificed the clergy in order to save themselves. They swore allegiance to the peasants on the twelve articles, and informed the community that 'each one who wished to join the peasants might do so, and might also return to the town when he liked, and he would not suffer any loss of civil rights, honour, or property.

As soon as the council at Wimpfen learnt that Heilbronn had allied itself with the peasants, it sent ambassadors thither, and, yielding to dire necessity, also

concluded a treaty with the insurgents. The town was to contribute a fixed sum of money and fixed consignments of fruit and wine, to be taken from the possessions of the clergy only; the citizens all had leave given them to join the peasants, and the town promised to accept every reform measure proposed by the peasants, and the rebel leaders in return gave the town a writ of protection for its property, and made over to them all the goods of the clergy.[1]

From fear of the Suabian League, to which Heilbronn belonged, the council would not grant the peasants a single company bearing the colours and arms of the town, but under the leadership of Hans Flux, whom the council made use of as go-between with the peasants, a 'free Heilbronn flag' came into existence. 'You dear Christian brothers,' Flux exclaimed to the burghers, 'come under this flag, with which we mean to defend the Evangel. All alike shall share in the plunder of fruit, wine, and money; the poor will be treated like the rich.' The council provided spears, armour, and firearms, and had powder and shot supplied to the peasants as per agreement. 'As soon as you want us to come back, send us word,' said Flux on leaving to one of the burgomasters, who answered: 'All right, dear Hans, good luck to you.' A citizen of Heilbronn was nominated Chief Quartermaster to the council of the joint army, and another citizen said confidently: 'We shall march into towns, plunder and massacre, and have fine sport.' Women of Heilbronn, too, equipped with armour and weapons, accompanied the march, and attached themselves to the old black hag who, at

[1] See Paulus, in the *Katholic*, 1892, i. 19. See also Baumann, *Acten*, p. 297.

Weinsberg, had thrust her knife into the dead body of the Count von Helfenstein, and before the gates of Heilbronn had pronounced a curse on the town, and also on the town councillors, whom she called villains and scoundrels. If things had happened according to her wish, the whole town would have been destroyed. She wanted to cut off the Countess's clothes from her body so that she might 'go along like a plucked goose.'[1]

On April 22 the united host left the camp before Heilbronn to join with several other companies which, meanwhile, had brought the whole district by the Neckar, the Rocher, and the Jax, either voluntarily or by force, into unison with the brotherhood. A detachment of the army stormed and plundered the Teutonic castle of Scheuerberg, on a hill above Neckarsulm, and Horneck, the 'Hofburg' of the Grand Master Dietrich von Cleen, and then advanced on the interior of Würtemberg, where several companies had already been organised for the purpose of proclaiming law and justice and administering the Word of God. One of these bands, on April 25, entered Stuttgardt, from which town the Austrian Government had fled; other bands overran and subjugated the whole of the Black Forest, with the exception of a few towns. In the free city of Hall, peasant women from the neighbourhood began to choose the houses which they would soon have for their own. 'They would soon be great ladies themselves,' they said to the ladies of the town. Nevertheless

[1] See Jacob Sturm's report, Schreiber, ii. 56; Jäger, *Geschichte von Heilbronn*, ii. 35–50; Zimmermann, ii. 439–490. The black Hofmännin is one of the most terrible figures in the whole socialistic revolution. . . . As helper and counsellor of Jäcklein Rohrbach she turned all her energies to murder, robbery, and incendiarism. Zimmermann (ii. 490) extols her as 'a Joan of Arc of the peasants' war.'

the town held its own against the insurgents. But its peasants allied themselves with the wild hordes from the lordship of Limpurg, whose head-quarters were at Gaildorf, and 'terrified everybody who had anything to lose with their burning and pillaging,' their destructive fury displaying itself most violently in the cloister of Lorch, where, on May 2, they burnt everything to cinders, not sparing even the graves of the Hohenstaufen emperors. The captain of a company from the villages under the jurisdiction of the free city of Gmünd marched with 300 men against the imperial stronghold of Hohenstaufen, pillaged it, and set it on fire. The Council of Gmünd were repeatedly summoned to join the brotherhood. The Gaildorfers threatened them on May 7 that if they persisted in refusing, 'they would, in the cause of divine justice and the Word of God, proceed against them as enemies of God.' They were kept off, however, from further molestations in Würtemberg by the Würtemberg peasants, who intimated to them that they could scour their cloisters and castles themselves.

'I have now been marching round about here with the peasants for a whole week,' said the captain of the Stuttgardt band to an ensign who had brought him a reinforcement of 200 Stuttgardters. 'I thought that they wanted to establish God's Word among them; but I see now that most of them are quite indifferent to it, and only care for pillage and theft.'

Duke Ulrich, who on April 21 had concluded a formal alliance with the rebels of the Hegau and the Schwarzwald, and had sent all his artillery from Hohentwiel to the 'Brethren of the League,' did not mix personally with the Würtemberg insurgent mob, but his

councillor and agent, Fuchs von Fuchstein, remained at their head-quarters and kept him informed of all their movements. When the peasants had captured the town of Sulz belonging to the Count of Geroldseck, Ulrich sent Fuchstein instructions from Rottweil, where he was quartered with his troopers, to manage his tactics so that the town should not be restored to the Count: 'for if this were to happen the troops would not treat us as brothers or vassals, but as enemies.' 'Above all,' so Ulrich advised the peasants, 'when you fight, see to it that you make your attacks as vigorously and persistently as possible; everything depends on this. We need have no doubt whatever that when the war is just and righteous, with God's help all will go well. God grant us this.'[1]

'The Holy Ghost is working in the people, it is the will of the Lord, and so it must be done;' this was the cry that sounded from the plundering, incendiary hordes which had gathered together in thousands in the margraviate of Baden, and were demolishing castles and cloisters. 'Thy goods are my goods, my goods are thy goods,' said a proletariat to a Count; 'we are all equal brothers in Christ.'[2] The town of Durlach joined the league and let in 3,000 insurgents. The peasants of Baden were joined by those of Bruhrain, in the diocese of Spires, who had just banded together for the sake of 'divine justice,' taken the town of Bruchsal on April 23, and established a government of their own. Two chief officers, Frederick Wurm and Johann von Hall, were to control and manage everything in the name of the

[1] Zimmermann, ii. 337–385; Wagner, pp. 233–244; Von Stälin, iv. 288–295; Ulrich's letter to Fuchstein of May 9, 1525, Oechsle, p. 349.

[2] Zimmermann, ii. 584, 586.

peasants. The united bands of the Baden and Bruhrain peasants 'laid waste churches and castles wherever they came, and joy was in the hearts of all the peasantry, that such desolation had come about.' Treaties which the Bishop of Spires and the Margrave Philip of Baden had made with the rebels at their own suggestion remained ineffectual; hostility and plunder went on uninterruptedly. In the Palatinate also, where the insurrection had gained the widest ground, the most strenuous exertions of the Count Palatine Ludwig towards a peace settlement had no lasting result.[1]

After the withdrawal from Heilbronn, several scattered bands of Franconian insurgents collected together at Gundelsheim, where the captains met in a great council of war. Wendel Hipler, the Chancellor and chief clerk of the camp, proposed that all the Landsknechts, numbers of whom had joined the peasant army, should be taken into their pay, so that they might have a nucleus of trained and experienced soldiers to give military instruction to the peasants. But the peasants rejected the proposal, because they were not willing to share the booty of their plundering expeditions with others. On the other hand, a second proposal of Hipler's—viz. to nominate Götz von Berlichingen as their Commander-in-Chief—was agreed to. Götz, who had already before offered himself to the insurgents, now made his appearance in Gundelsheim to be received into the brotherhood. His enrolment is thus recorded in a document of April 24: 'I, Jörg Metzler von Ballen-

[1] Two hitherto unprinted letters concerning the peasant rising in the bishopric of Spires, from the town archives of Zabern (Alsace), are contributed by Adam to the *Zeitschrift für Geschichte des Oberrheins*, 1891, S. 699 and the following.

berg, Colonel, and other commanders of the Christian band of the peasants, make known that we have received the honourable squire Götz von Berlichingen into our Christian league and brotherhood.'[1]

The plan of war of the 'Christian band' was first of all to subjugate the districts of Mayence and Würzburg, and then those of Treves and Cologne.

On April 30 the peasant troops, with Götz von Berlichingen and George Metzler at their head, appeared in the Benedictine abbey of Amorbach and informed the abbot and the monks, 'with solemn words and threats, that they had come to institute a reformation as Christian brothers.' In view of this the monks 'must deliver over to them all their treasures, all silver-work, all jewels, and whatever else they could, on pain of death.' While this parleying was going on, the peasants broke into the abbey and seized or destroyed whatever was of any value: garments, vessels, books with costly bindings of gold and silver, mitres, wine, fruit, cattle, and household furniture. In the church the altar was plundered and desecrated, and the beautiful organ destroyed. Götz, too, took his share of the rich booty, treasures to the amount of 150 gulden, and among them the splendid mitre of the abbot, the pearls and jewels of which his worthy lady took for a necklace. The abbot, 'robbed of all his clothes, was compelled to be present at the feasting, clad in a linen smock frock which some one lent him out of pity.' 'They drank out of the church chalices, sixteen of which were taken from the monastery.' When the abbot could not conceal his grief, Götz mocked at him: 'Be of good cheer,' he said, 'do not look so woe-begone,

[1] See above, p. 261.

do not distress yourself; I have been three times ruined, and yet you see me here; you're not used to it, that's all.' One poor peasant brought three beakers, one of which was pure gold, the other two silver and gilt, which he had found under the slates of the tower, where the custodian had hidden them. The " captains " took the beakers, and had the custodian scourged with rods.'

From Amorbach Götz and George Metzler issued a peremptory command to the council and community of Gundelsheim ' without delay to raze to the ground the castle of Horneck,' which till then had been the residence of the master of the Teutonic Knights.[1]

In Amorbach also it was determined by the ' captains ' to kill all ' princes, squires, and nobles; but those of the nobles who swore allegiance to them, they would leave unmolested.'

And now the news reached Frankfort-on-the-Maine that the ' evangelical army ' was on its way there to overrun the town and massacre the Teutonic Knights and the Jews.

In Frankfort[2] also ' at this same Easter-tide which the peasants celebrated everywhere with pillage and rapine ' an insurrection had broken out. Its moving spirit was Doctor Gerhard Westerburg, of Cologne, Carlstadt's brother-in-law and intimate associate. He dubbed himself an ' evangelical ' and founded an

[1] Berlichingen-Rossach, *Geschichte des Ritters Götz von Berlichingen* (Leipzig, 1861), S. 236 See also Wegele, pp. 159–164, where fuller details show that Götz was not so free from blame as he tries to prove in his *Lebensbeschreibung*. See A. Baumgartner's essay on Götz in the *Stimmen aus Maria-Laach*, 1879, 298–315.

[2] For the Frankfort insurrection see Kriegk, *Frankfurter Bürgerzwiste und Zustände*, pp. 137–203, and Steitz, *Gerhard Westerburg* pp. 70–102.

'evangelical brotherhood,' with which he held conferences in his own house, chiefly at night. Already, before the outbreak of the conspiracy on April 17, he had drawn up 'articles' which had been sent from Frankfort to Mayence, and on to Cologne, where they were printed and widely circulated, obviously with the intention of effecting a simultaneous rising in these towns. These articles consisted essentially of the same demands and grievances which had been brought forward elsewhere against the spiritual and temporal authorities, against excessive taxation, Jewish usury, and perversion of justice by advocates. They were also in like manner based on the Gospel. In the introduction to the list of articles addressed to the council it said: 'Notwithstanding that the Almighty has sent his Spirit, with the revelation of his holy Gospel, into many hearts, and enlightened all such with the faith, yet the ecclesiastical gangs of monks and priests have in countless ways, without any basis of truth, presumed to suppress this light, and have blasphemously and scandalously spread about—because the devil is seeking through them as his members to make the nation factious—that the Word of God causes tumult and insurrection. Seeing now that God is more to be obeyed than man, it is of highest necessity that godly and brotherly proceedings, to the praise of God and the honour of his Word and to the furtherance of brotherly love and unity, should be started, in order that we may reform ourselves, and not let others set about reforming us.'

Already at the beginning of the Lenten fair the rumour went abroad that at the end of it something new would be seen in the town; for there was a great con-

spiracy and stir going on. 'On the 17th of April the people of Neustadt and Sachsenhäuser collected together, and during the following days the whole town was in the power of the armed insurgents.' 'The honourable council,' said the municipal record of the insurrection, 'presented a most woe-begone appearance at their sitting: they looked like men who were trembling for life and limb, honour and possessions.' The leaders, who had formed themselves into a revolution committee, were the tailor Nicolaus Wild, surnamed the Warrior (because he had seen something of war), and Westerburg's friend Hans Hamerschmidt von Siegen, a presumptuous master of the shoemakers' guild, and his journeymen. The demand of the Town Council that four of its members should be elected to the committee was rejected by the insurgents with the words: 'They wanted no town councillors, they were themselves Council, Burgomaster, Pope, and Emperor.' The surrounding villages were also drawn into the insurrection, and they sent in their articles of complaint to the Town Council.

In a memorial of April 22 the committee, after handing in the municipal articles to the magistrate, declared as follows: 'If we were to abide by privileges and statutes of men, as has hitherto been done, we should have to renounce the Word of God and brotherly love, which would not beseem us at all as Christians. We would rather lose life and property than that through fear of human laws and privileges any prejudice should be done to the Word of God. Where, however, we may have inserted one or more articles which are contrary to the Word of God or brotherly love, and this is proved to us out of the Holy Scriptures, we shall be

willing to be reproved by his Word in all reverence, and to retract the articles. But if such should not be the case, we will not let ourselves be led astray by any opinions of men, but we will hold by the Word of God and brotherly love.'

The insurgents did not desist from threatening and terrifying till they had wrung from the council and the clergy agreement to all that they had laid down. On April 22 the council swore to the whole forty-five articles, after which the burgesses, with uplifted hands, renewed their oaths of citizens. With this proceeding the revolution seemed to have come to an end and tranquillity to be restored.

Now, however, the meaning was plainly seen of the proviso with which these articles, like the twelve articles of the peasants, were concluded: 'To bring forward anything further that was necessary.' The revolution committee did not dissolve itself, but out of its ten most radical members formed a smaller committee, which under the direction of the shoemaker, Hans Hamerschmidt von Siegen, made new demands from day to day, and raised the old ones higher.

In all the neighbouring villages and towns, as far as to Coblentz, peasants and burghers were in a state of insurrection. In Mayence, on April 25, after the insurgents had got possession of the town gates and had mounted all their artillery, a treaty was concluded by which the cathedral chapter and the archiepiscopal stattholder, Bishop Wilhelm of Strassburg, consented to the articles.[1]

From Mayence the Rheingauers received 'hints,

[1] See Hennes, *Albrecht von Brandenburg*, pp. 212–216. May, i. pp. 665–669.

encouragement, and promises of money remittances;' besides which they were further stimulated by crafty and eloquent messengers, supposed to be commissioned by Luther, who represented to them that if, after the example of other episcopal vassals, they wished to break with sacerdotal rule and obtain complete freedom, they should seize the present moment when they might count on the certain help and support of powerful princes and lords. The result was that the Rheingauers also rose in rebellion, and compelled the Stattholder and cathedral chapter to accept the conditions they laid down.[1] In the neighbourhood of Treves, in the districts of Saarburg and Bliescastel, there were also risings. The towns of Wesel and Boppard were on the point of joining the movement. Incendiaries spread universal consternation. 'In the course of a few days,' wrote the Archbishop Richard of Treves on April 17, 'several boroughs and villages along the Rhine were set on fire, and some were quite, others almost, burnt to the ground.'

The 'united troops' of the Odenwald sent agents to all the different parts of the archbishopric of Mayence to try and force all the inhabitants to take up the cause of the Evangel. Frankfort also, so the instructions ran, must be coerced; the 'united bands' contemplated a march against this town under the generalship of Götz von Berlichingen and George Metzler. When the magistrate, on receipt of this intelligence, asked the guilds what he might expect from them in such an event, some of them answered that they would defend with life and goods the honourable magistrate and the community, but that they could not be responsible for the clergy or

[1] Kraus, *Beiträge*, pp. 16, 17.

the Jews in case of any attack on the town; others said that on the approach of the peasants they would obey the orders of the committee only. 'There were many wicked scoundrels among them,' said Königstein in his diary, 'who intended to deliver up to the shambles the clergy and the Jews, and the Teutonic Knights also. They had also been heard to say that if things did not go as they liked they would not abide by the articles. The commander of the Teutonic Order was threatened with pillage, and all ground property belonging to the town was taken by force. Artisans went from house to house with the intention of stirring up fresh risings; a member of the committee rang the alarm bell in order to bring the peasants to their feet to attack the councillors; the senior Burgomaster, into whose house the insurgents burst, was compelled to buy himself off with 100 guldens; between the radical and the moderate parties matters nearly came to open fighting.

It was a deliverance from extremest peril when the 'united bands' turned their march in another direction.

After they had forced into the brotherhood the nine towns in the archbishopric of Mayence, in the Odenwald, and on the Maine, they advanced against Aschaffenburg and besieged the archiepiscopal Stattholder in his castle there. The burghers of the town lent their most ready assistance. 'On the approach of the peasants, they confessed later to the magistrate and the community, 'we promised the archiepiscopal Stattholder, Bishop Wilhelm of Strassburg, on our oath, to stake our lives and goods in his service; the Stattholder agreed to all the articles we submitted to him, and made us many gracious assurances, but we soon forgot all our promises.' They said that when Bishop Wilhelm, with his house-

hold and official staff, was on the point of setting sail to Steinheim, they (the burghers) had hurriedly collected their armour and weapons, had closed the gates of the city, barricaded the streets with carts, barrels, and arquebuses, let 1,200 peasants of Spessart into the town, and with the help of the latter had kept the Stattholder for three days imprisoned and besieged in the castle, till at last he made terms with the insurgents and agreed to the twelve articles. Furthermore, they had aided and abetted the peasants of Spessart in attacking the houses of the clergy and carrying off their property; they had also sent a goodly number of burghers to the help of the insurgents at Würzburg.'

In the treaty which the Stattholder concluded with the rebels on May 7, in concurrence with the cathedral chapter, he agreed not only to the twelve articles but also to eight others, by which the whole archbishopric was to be involved in the insurrection. All towns and villages of the diocese were to accept these terms and join the league and swear to be faithful to it, and obedient to the orders of the appointed commanders of the 'united army.' Whatever places refused to comply with these terms must expect an invasion of the peasants' army. Where necessary they must defend the league with swords and guns; all the nobles must present themselves in a month's time before the captains and enrol themselves in the union, or else they too must be prepared to be attacked; the clergy of the archbishopric must pay up 15,000 gulden within a fortnight. All the cloisters were to be thrown open from that very hour, and any priest or monk who continued wearing the habit of his order should not be received into the union. Besides all this, the Stattholder

promised to abide by everything that was settled and ordained by pious, able, and learned people in these and all other Christian matters and contingencies belonging to the land. The Stattholder's councillor, Marx Stumpf, the chief agent in this treaty, actually promised the peasants that he would accompany them himself to Würzburg.[1]

At Miltenberg, where the treaty was concluded, the Count George of Wertheim was personally present in the camp of the 'united troops,' gave himself up to the peasants with full surrender, swore to devote life and property to their service, sent them provisions without delay, and, when the army moved on further, he even led his guns and ammunition into the field.[2] He burnt and plundered two districts of Würzburg, and also the abbey of Bronnbach, the Carthusian cloister of Grünan near Wertheim, and the wooden church belonging to the Benedictine monastery lying between Wertheim and Würzburg. Duke George, so the Bishop of Würzburg complained later on, had completely forsaken him, his feudal lord, in the time of greatest need; not only had he sent no men to his assistance when called upon to do so and refused to lend the asked-for ordnance, but he had even gone over to the peasants, made terms with them, and promised to help them according to his ability, and had done injury to his feudal lord by lending his enemies firearms and powder. 'On horse and on foot also in his own person' he had fought in the peasants' ranks against the castle of Würzburg, and had given out to the garrison of the town that he was a kinsman of the peasants, and

[1] Zimmermann, ii. 519–521. Hennes, pp. 205–207.
[2] Zimmermann, ii. 521.

an enemy of the bishop and the inhabitants of the castle. Götz von Berlichingen, who was also a vassal of the bishop, withdrew his allegiance from him, and then, in conjunction with George Metzler and the general assembly of the Christian league of the Neckarthal and the Odenwald, required of the bishop to acquiesce in the twelve articles and in everything else that might 'later on be reformed, reduced, augmented, improved, or decreed.' 'Hitherto,' they said in their memorial, 'owing to very inadequate proclamation and revelation of the holy Evangel, they had not only been neglected, but preposterously and indescribably down-trodden, and burdened with such heavy oppression that it was no longer possible for Christian hearts to endure such treatment.' They gave the Bishop four days to consider, and if at the end of that time he had not sent envoys with full power to conclude an agreement they would feel themselves compelled to resort to force for the protection of their 'fellow-brethren and Christians of the diocese of Würzburg.'[1] It was the Würzburg citizens themselves who incited the Odenwald and Franconian peasants to march against their town.

The whole bishopric was in complete revolt.

'The course of events here is so rapid and terrible,' wrote the bishop's chancellor on April 16 to a kinsman at Constance, 'that life is a misery whether one be lord or serf.' Six towns and nine districts had seceded from the bishop within three days, and the town of Würzburg had 'also risen in revolt against his Grace, and no one knows how long he may be left alive.

[1] Lorenz Fries, i. 191–194. See the admirable answer of the bishop, who was a fugitive at Heidelberg, pp. 199, 200.

'Everywhere they are crying out: "Strike them dead, strike them dead!" Consequently numbers of the prebendaries have left the town; some have gone to Mayence, some to the castle of Würzburg, and the others to their places of custody. I would not spend these Easter holidays in the town for a thousand guldens. The Franconian peasants have taken many cloisters and also some castles, towns, and villages from my gracious lord, and part of them they have burnt down.' 'We have an untold amount of work and worry, I and fourteen other secretaries especially. We do nothing but sit in council, discuss and write all day and all night. I know that my gracious lord and myself have not had sixteen hours' sleep in the last eight days.' While he is writing there comes the news that two more towns and three districts have revolted. 'And they are the most miserable, God-forsaken people you ever set eyes on. Whenever they encounter our cavalry they let themselves be strangled like hens without resistance. In my opinion this is a judgment of God on the clergy and laity.'[1]

While the 'evangelical army' on the one side, and the Franconian on the other, were marching against Würzburg, and thousands of 'purse-lifters, loafers, depredators, and thieves of all sorts' were swarming up from all directions, and leaving fire and rapine behind them, 'the Christian brothers were having good sport with the town of Rotenburg.' The inhabitants had been informed that for the establishment of the holy Evangel, the restoration of justice, and the protection of the divine word, they were to join the brotherhood and make over to them all their most powerful guns, with

[1] Lorenz Fries, i. 116–119. Wieland, pp. 35–38.

sufficient ammunition and men; also if the citizens were ready to become 'brethren' they must be prepared, in case of need, to forsake their wives and children and property and throw in their lot with the peasants, and even open to them the gates of the town. The town populace threatened the council that if they did not help the 'brethren' they would ring the alarm bell and go over to the peasants with all the town artillery; the Landsknechts in the service of the town gave out that as soon as the peasants appeared they would join them in fighting against the town. In the council itself the revolutionary party had got the upper hand, and while negotiations for an alliance were going on with the peasants, they had carried a resolution that all the possessions of the secular and monastic clergy were to be taken from them—even should the latter have been constituted ordinary citizens and accepted all the responsibilities of citizenship. The supplies of corn and wine were to be equally divided, so that each citizen might have a share; jewels and chalices were to be sold, and the proceeds used for the military pay of the citizens. While the plundered clergy, monks, and nuns had scarcely a crumb of bread left, the insurgents, 'old and young, were drinking themselves drunk.' 'Numbers of them who could no longer stand upright, lay about in the streets, young children especially who had saturated themselves with wine.' On May 14 the league between the town and the Franconian peasants was completed. Its articles ran as follows: 'First, the general assembly will establish the Holy Word of God, the evangelical doctrine, and see that it is preached in its purity without admixture of human learning and

opinions. And what the holy Evangel decrees *shall* be decreed, and what it condemns *shall* be condemned, and remain condemned. And meanwhile no rents, dues, wages, capitation fees, or such like shall be given to any feudal lord until such time as the learned interpreters of the holy, divine, and true Scriptures have instituted a reformation. Also all pernicious castles and fortifications, by which the common people have hitherto been grievously injured, shall be pulled down or burnt. (Nevertheless all that is in them of movable goods shall be left to those who are willing to become brothers, and who have in no way acted against the general assembly. All the guns found in such castles shall become the property of the general assembly.) All clerical and secular nobles and commoners also must henceforth be subject to the same conditions as the burghers and peasants, and must not enjoy any higher privileges or position than any other people.' The nobles were to restore to the brotherhood, on pain of forfeiting life and chattels, all the confiscated property of the clergy or others, especially that of the ecclesiastics of noble birth. And finally: whatever the "reformation and ordinance" resolved upon by the men skilled in Holy Writ shall decree must be obediently followed by all clericals and laymen.' Rotenburg joined the brotherhood for a period of a hundred and one years. The most powerful guns of the town were given over to the peasants, with powder and cannon-balls. The late Burgomaster, Ehrenfried Kumpf, a patron of Carlstadt's, had worked zealously to bring about the 'union of the town with the peasants for the advancement of the Evangel,' and he now betook himself, fully equipped, to Würzburg to the camp of the

insurgents, who had bombarded the strong fortress of Frauenberg. Würzburg, said Kumpf, had been greatly oppressed through the tyranny of the bishops, and consequently the castle must be felled to the ground.[1]

Simultaneously with these risings in Upper Germany an insurrection had also broken out in Thuringia. Its central point was the free city of Mühlhausen. Thomas Munzer and his associate Heinrich Pfeiffer had stirred up a revolt of the populace there in September 1524. 'In all the churches and cloisters the altars were plundered, all the tables and altars were carried off, and the relics treated shamefully.' The two preachers taught 'their followers of all classes that they were not bound to obey the ruling powers, that nobody need pay interest and rents, and that all the clergy must be persecuted and driven out of the land.' 'The Word of God,' so they preached, 'has now come to you with purity and clearness, and you have removed the idolatry of images and altars from the churches; but if you wish for salvation you must also cast out the idols in your houses and treasure-chests, and especially all your fine metal vessels, your jewels, your silverwork, and the silver and gold money in your coffers.'

In addition to Münzer and Pfeiffer, the ruined Teutonic Knight, Johann Laue, also came forward as an ardent member of the new 'Christian League.' He 'dispensed the Communion every day and stuffed the elements that remained into his pocket; he caused the images to be smashed up and burnt, and he had tankards made out of the organ-pipes.' In his sermons he called

[1] See above, p. 95.

the princes by all manner of abusive names, and said that no one ought to obey them. He preached that all property should be in common, and that 'the idols of the wealthy burghers should be carried off from their coffers, their rooms, their walls;' in the Sacrament it was the devil that was carried about in the monstrance; he advised that the old system of government in Mühlhausen should be done away with.

'The Government of Mühlhausen,' wrote the Bailiff of Salza, Sittich von Berlepsch, to Duke George of Saxony on September 26, 1524, 'was utterly misguided and corrupt. The peasants in the villages of the district had banded together, and sent word to the community of Mühlhausen that their unchristian behaviour was intolerable, and that if they did not alter it they (the peasants) must and would see about setting up another kind of rule, for otherwise they would all be ruined. Yesterday, Sunday, towards evening, the peasants at Bolstedt were warned to be on their guard, for there was a plot to set fire to their village at four different points. This morning before daybreak this same village was burnt to the ground, and large quantities of corn were destroyed in the flames. Doctor Luther has sent a preacher to Mühlhausen who preaches against the Alstedlers; they call each other heretics and rogues.' Berlepsch appended to his letter the 'articles' which 'Münzer and Pfeiffer had drawn up and sent round to the villages of the Mühlhausen district, and also to the common people of Mühlhausen.' They began with the words: 'God be praised, the communities of Mühlhausen, of St. Nicholas, St. George, and St. Margaret, and the linen-weavers of St. Jacob, and many other artisans, have conferred concerning the government of Mühlhausen,

and have shaped their decision according to God's Word. Where, however, this decision is in opposition to the Word of God, it must be altered and improved.' It was intended to appoint an entirely new council which should 'legislate and pronounce judgment' in accordance with the Bible. 'If it should not be granted us to search out the commandments of God, we desire to be informed by you what the good God and his only Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, have done to you, that you will not suffer them to rule over your miserable wormbag of a town. In what have they lied unto you or deceived you?' 'It is also the intention and decision of us all, that all our works and actions shall be judged by the commandments and the righteousness of God. If they are pleasing to the world but displeasing to God, or pleasing to God and displeasing to the world, we shall choose but one course out of two. We would far rather have God for our friend and the enmity of the world, than the enmity of God and the friendship of the world. This we write to you, Christian brethren, that ye may know how to proceed.'[1]

Towards the end of the year 1524 Mühlhausen was the scene of fresh iconoclast riots and plundering. The Dominican provincial of Saxony wrote as follows to the Imperial Government at Esslingen on January 11, 1525: 'I lament and bewail the gross outrages, violence, and injustice committed against my brethren at Mühlhausen. Because they have not chosen to preach and celebrate the Mass according to Lutheran fashion, or to discard their clerical vestments and status, and repudiate their vows, their treasures of jewels, monstrances, chalices, and so forth must needs be taken

[1] Seidemann, *Beiträge*, ii. 379–381.

off to the council hall, they are forbidden to hold Masses or other divine services, all their altars and images are smashed up or burnt, and finally they have been attacked with murderous weapons by countless hordes of people. All their provisions of flour, bread, corn, and meat have been carried off, and part of them cooked in the cloister, and all the images of the saints destroyed; and finally all their keys have been taken from them, and as they would not cast off the dress of their order they have been expelled from the town.' Similar complaints went forth from the Barefoot monastery, where for the space of a whole week 'the sale of Mass vestments, velvet, silk, pearls, &c., was carried on.' 'The same ravages went on in the churches. Here too—and actually with the personal help of the preacher Johann Laue—pictures and images of saints were smashed up; the statues adorning the outside of the church of St. Blasius were knocked down with timber-beams when they could not be reached otherwise. In the church of the Dominicans the organ was broken in pieces and the Chapel of the Rosary walled up, so that no more masses might be held there; threats were also heard that the women and others 'who would not turn Lutheran' would be immured there. Later on crowds of strangers, people who had left their homes owing to discontent with existing conditions, fugitives, exiles, adventurers, swarmed into Mühlhausen, where the revolutionary party received them with open arms. By the middle of February Münzer had also returned to Mühlhausen from his expeditions in Upper Germany and Switzerland.[1] In March[2] the 'Christian Govern-

[1] Merx, *Thomas Münzer*, i. 100.

[2] See Seidemann, *Thomas Münzer*, pp. 48–53, 65–66; Merx, *Thomas Münzer*, i. 104 ff., 108 ff.

ment' which had been announced in the 'Articles' drawn up by Münzer and Pfeiffer was established, the old council was deposed and a new 'permanent' one elected. 'There are still numbers of honourable citizens in Mühlhausen,' wrote Sittlich von Verkepsch to Duke George, 'to whom these proceedings are grievously distressing. But the preachers have so embittered the minds of the adventurers and the populace, that respectable men have no following.' The 'permanent council' was made up chiefly of paupers and needy adventurers.

'They give out publicly that they know of more than five or six thousand men who will come over to them; they have also had an intimation from the peasants of the Black Forest that they too will join their Christian brotherhood.' The neighbourhood of Mühlhausen had already, in part, been drawn into the insurrection, and the peasants were heard to declare 'that they had a God who was their ruler, and that they had no intention of obeying any other lord.'

'The kingdom of God and no other,' was what Münzer preached. The only way, he said, to please God was to return to the original state of equality, and to introduce community of goods. The surrounding peasants flocked in thousands to Mühlhausen, and listened with delight to the 'announcement of such a kingdom of God.' Whenever Münzer preached, choirs of young men and maidens struck in with the promise of Jehovah to the sons of Judah: 'On the morrow ye shall set forth, and the Lord will be with you.' No poor man in the town would work any longer; when he wanted corn or clothing or anything else he went to a rich man and took it on the plea of Christian right. Out of the con-

fiscated property of the clergy Münzer chose for himself the Johanniterhof with its revenues. In the Barefoot monastery he had firearms and cannon-balls cast, and ordered the people to arm themselves. He sent out apostles of his 'Kingdom of God' in all directions, and clamoured, in missives, for the slaughter of princes and lords. 'Dear brethren, how long will ye slumber?' he says in a letter to the miners in the earldom of Mansfeld; 'awake and fight the battle of the Lord. It is high time. Charge and admonish all your brethren that they do not mock at divine manifestations, for else they must all perish. The whole German, French, and Italian lands are aroused. The Lord will show forth his might and the wicked ones will be forced to submit. At Fulda, in Easter-week, four cathedral churches were destroyed; the peasants in the Klettgau, the Hegau, and the Black Forest are up, and more than 300,000 strong, and the host increases day by day.' 'Strike, strike, strike! this is the auspicious moment; the wicked ones are quaking like hounds. Do not let yourselves be moved to pity, even though Esau should speak fair words to you. Regard not the lamentation of the godless. Stir up the villages and towns, and above all the mining folk, with other good fellows who will be favourable to the cause. We must sleep no longer.' 'The peasants of the Eichsfeld have waxed merry over their squires—in short, they intend to give them no more quarter. Strike, strike, strike! while the iron's hot. Keep your swords warm with the blood of tyrants. It is not possible, while they still live, that you should be freed from the fear of man. One cannot speak to you of God, while they rule over you. Strike, strike, strike! while it is still day. God goes before you; do

you follow? The history is written in the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew. Let not yourselves therefore be intimidated, God the Lord is with you. It is the Lord's battle, not yours; it is not you who are fighting. Quit yourselves verily like men, and you will have the Lord for your helper. When Jehoshaphat heard these words, he fell upon the ground. Therefore, strike with God's help, who will strengthen you, without fear of man, for the true faith. Amen.' He signed himself: 'Thomas Münzer, a servant of God against the godless ones.'[1]

While Münzer was thus advocating 'godly slaughter,' his associate Pfeiffer was marching at the head 'of a motley concourse of people' to the neighbouring district of Eichsfeld. They spread themselves over the country, they robbed, murdered, and burnt; cloisters, castles, and villages were stormed and burnt to the ground; the inhabitants were compelled by force to join the rebels; whoever refused to do so was condemned to be speared to death.[2]

With lightning rapidity the insurrection spread over the whole of Thuringia and the neighbouring provinces; in the earldoms of Mansfeld, Stolberg, Schwarzburg, in the Eichsfeld, in Hesse, in Braunschweig, in Saxony and Meissen, towns and villages rose in rebellion and strove to set themselves free, as the people of Mühlhausen had done. 'My lord and my king,' wrote the humanist Conrad Mutian on April 27, 1525, from Gotha to the Elector Frederic of Saxony, 'my soul is sorrowful even unto death. With such violence, such

[1] Letter quoted by Strobel, *Thomas Münzer*, pp. 93–96.

[2] See Seidemann, *Münzer*, p. 75; Strobel, pp. 89–90 (for rest of this note see vol. ii. p. 561 of German original).

inhumanity, such gruesome cruelty, do the rough peasant hordes plunder and lay waste the holy temples of God. A melancholy spectacle is presented by the wandering nuns and the homeless priests driven out of their sacred dwelling-places by the sacrilegious mobs of church pillagers. I myself, needy and wretched, am now compelled in my old age to beg my bread.'[1]

Smoking, flaming houses proclaimed everywhere the religious ardour of the Christian Brothers and the disciples of the kingdom of heaven. 'Things here are as bad and as miserable as possible,' says the tax-gatherer at Alstedt; 'all the monasteries and convents have been pillaged. There is no longer any respect here for rulers, but only contempt for all authority. It is a lamentable matter that there are so many princes in the land, and that not one of them draws a sword against the rebels.' Several of the nobles, among others the Counts Ernst von Hohenstein and Günther von Schwarzburg, joined the league as 'Brothers,' and entered into correspondence with Münzer. 'In the

[1] Tentzel, *Rel. epp. Mutiani*, pp. 75–78. Mutian, after long wanderings, 'terrified by the abyss which the destructive fury of the reformers opened up before him,' had returned to the Mother Church, and 'the religion of his fathers had never before seemed so venerable to him as now, when everything was combining to compass its ruin.' But 'his own past weighed heavily on him. When he looked back at his earlier life he was obliged to admit that he had himself helped to bring about the present state of things. This thought embittered his days and robbed him of the confidence with which others of his way of thinking entered the lists for the old Church. Once upon a time he had shrunk, out of mere shyness, from coming forward in print; now he saw himself condemned to silence by the fruits of his own action.' He died on March 30, 1526, in the most abject misery, but in Christian resignation. His last words were: 'Christ, look down in pity on thy servant; thy will be done' (Kampschule, ii. 229–237). What Luther says about Mutian having committed suicide (Wrampelmeier, *Tagebuch über Luther*, p. 237, No. 932) is quite erroneous.

army of the rebels,' says the tax-gatherer of Alstedt, 'there are also many preachers who preach the Gospel according to Luther's interpretation; they do not think much of Münzer.' 'In Salza also there is a fine tumult going on, and ruined scoundrels who have nothing to lose are inciting the people to help on the evangel by burning and plundering.'

The 'Evangelical Brotherhood' of Langensalza, under the leadership of the cobbler Melchior Wigand, obtained in the middle of April 1525 a zealous assistant in the preacher Johann Teigfuss. On the occasion of an annual market, when numbers of foreign folk had collected together in the town, Wigand sounded the alarm bell on April 20, and the disaffected crowds, provided with armour and weapons, and carrying lighted torches, soon reduced the town council to submission. First of all the monks and the nuns were hustled out of the cloisters, with the reiterated declaration that 'it was the will of the community that no assemblage of monastic people should exist in the town, but that they had no fault to find with them individually.' Then they took all the silver-work and all the treasures out of the cloisters and churches 'into custody. . . .'

The customary church service was forbidden, and Teigfuss preached 'unrestrainedly whatever might conduce to uproar, and raged against magistrates and rulers, as if everything was doomed to destruction.' On April 29 Teigfuss led a strong army out of the town and plundered Nägelstädt; all the chalices, mass-vestments, crosses, monstrances, and treasures of silver were taken out of all the churches, bells and windows were smashed and broken, all provisions, corn, and

cattle were carried off. On the following day the town populace leagued itself with a large number of peasants, among whose leaders was Albrecht Menge, 'by trade, according to circumstances, either a French doctor, or a barber, or a cloth-shearer.' The town council and the nobility of the neighbouring districts were compelled 'to accept the "twelve Articles" of the peasants, and to take up the cause of the evangel.' Then the 'Christian Brothers' rose up over the whole land under their leader Wigand, to 'help on the evangel.' 'Dear friends,' they wrote to the council of Weissensee, 'it is undoubtedly known unto you how we of Salza, by divine instigation and for the sake of the holy evangel, have set forth with the purpose of enforcing everywhere certain Articles based on the Holy Scriptures.' If the town did not subscribe to these, 'the irresistible host of Mühlhausen, which even now had stormed and destroyed many of the finest castles in the Eichsfeld, would come down upon them and soon bring them to their senses.' Weissensee, however, kept its gates barred.

'We hope,' so ran the answer of the council and the community to the insurgents, 'albeit we cannot live altogether without sin, that we have not hitherto behaved otherwise than becomes pious Christians. We cannot give in to you in any respect, but we intend as far as lies in our power to live and to act according to God's Word and in allegiance to our gracious lord, the prince of the territory, Duke George of Saxony.' They appealed urgently for help to the Duke, and the latter announced to them his speedy arrival.[1]

'We have called out all our vassals to war,' wrote Duke George on April 27 to the Landgrave Philip of

[1] Seidemann, *Beiträge*, xiv. 513–548.

Hesse, 'being moved to this chiefly by the sinister events which the peasants, who call themselves a Christian Brotherhood, are occasioning in the highlands, and by the preachers, who have preached the Lutheran gospel so plainly and purely that one might have foreseen the fruits which are now patent to our eyes. Seeing that we ourselves, praise be to God, have always set ourselves against this matter, it is to be feared that we and ours may be treated with more animosity than others; but we think that if the poor people are not incited to perjury and to injuring their neighbours, the insurrection may be kept down.

The Erfurt preachers had for years long been among the most violent agitators in town and country: the spades and hoes of the country people, so one of them insisted, must come to the aid of the 'evangel,' and the keen-visioned Usingen had consequently, as early as the beginning of 1523, predicted a peasant insurrection as the necessary result of such proceedings.[1] 'By your demoralising preaching,' Usingen had said to the preacher Culsamer at the beginning of 1525, 'you make the people seditious, and the result is that they not only revolt against the clergy, against whom

[1] 'Quid praetenderas,' he exclaims to the preacher Mechler, 'quando de suggesto et vernaculis intimationibus plebem rudem ad illam [disputationem] citaveras! Quid denique, dum eo loci ad populum clamaveras, necesse esse, ut vel pastino, sarculis et ligonibus suburbanis evangelio consuleretur, quando nec tua, nec tuorum proficerent verba! Meministine rusticae insolentiae, qua jam passim subditi in dominos suos tumultuantes insurgunt contra fidelitatem, quam illis promiserunt et juraverunt?' 'Nescitis, populum esse bestiam multorum capitum, bestiam cruentam, quae sanguinem sitit, vosne ergo rem vestram sanguinariis perficietis?' See Kampschulte, ii. 203–204. The letters of Eobanus Hessus to Sturz give a most melancholy picture of the state of things in Erfurt (Krause, *Eobanus Hessus*, i. 400–401).

you are everlastingly stirring them up, but also against all secular rulers. The latter will come to see, when it is too late, how foolishly they have acted in taking you under their protection.'[1] Only too soon was this prophecy fulfilled. On the news of the insurrection of the peasants in Suabia and Franconia several gatherings of peasants were held in the Erfurt district in the spring of 1525. The captains determined to lead the whole mass of the country people into the town, to set up a new 'permanent council' instead of the existing one, and to impose the stipulations laid down in their 'Articles;' if the members of the council offered resistance they were all to be murdered, and the houses of the wealthy were to be plundered. On April 27, 5,000 armed peasants appeared before the gates of the town and demanded admission. The town council sent them food and drink, and promised to give them an answer the next day. But the peasants said they would not treat with the 'bloodhounds' of the council, but only with the community; and those among the community who inclined to Lutheranism[2] made common cause with the insurgents, assembled together, and threatened, with invectives against the council, to open the gates by force. It was in vain that the council appealed to the preachers for help in quieting the tumult. The latter were themselves helpless and resourceless. Eberlin von Günzburg, who had come to Erfurt in 1524, was the only one who by fearlessly addressing the town populace effected a temporary

[1] Paulus, *Barth. Arnoldi von Usingen*, p. 102.

[2] See the letter of the eye-witness Johann Elliger to Johann Hecht, Jörg, pp. 127–128. 'The Martinians (so the Lutherans were called at first) wanted to break open the Augustinian gate and let in the peasants.'

lull; but with the peasants whom he followed into their camps he could do nothing. They insisted on immediate opening of the gates and acceptance of the 'Articles.'

In order to save themselves, the members of the council made the disgraceful compact with the peasants that they might enter the town, on condition that they spared the property of the burghers, and might plunder the churches, and the ecclesiastical possessions, and pull down the palace of the Archbishop of Mayence, the hereditary lord of the town, the customs house and the salt-works. On April 28 the insurgents made their entry, with the captain of the town soldiery, who lauded and encouraged them, at their head. 'The town council of Erfurt,' says a municipal report, 'has opened the gates to the devouring army of insurgent peasants, and also given them leave to plunder and destroy all the churches and cloisters, the archiepiscopal palace, the town hall, the customs house and the hangman's house, and the salt stores, besides all the clergy houses. The council has also itself taken possession of several churches, among them the Augustinian church and the Carmelite monastery, and appropriated a large portion of the church treasures and ornaments.' The peasants devoured in wild orgies all the wine and eatables that they found in the houses of the clergy; carried off all that had been left in them by the town mob on the occasion of former raids; smashed up altars and images in the churches, and stole a hundred gold and silver chalices from the cathedral alone.

The members of the town council not only allowed this frenzy of destruction free course, but even took part in the pillaging themselves; they appropriated

among other things the silver coffin in which lay the bones of Saints Eobanus and Adelarius. The town council made over the churches that had been pillaged to the 'evangelicals,' and appointed the preacher Lange preacher to the cathedral. The humanist Eobanus Hessus was highly delighted at these events. 'We have driven out the Bishop of Mayence, never again to receive back this shameless lord, or rather tyrant,' he wrote to a friend. 'All the monks and nuns have been turned out, the prebendaries ejected, the churches plundered; we have had regard to the good of the community; taxes and customs houses have been done away with. Liberty has been restored to us.' 'But,' he adds, 'I have misgivings that thunder clouds are threatening us.' These thunder clouds quickly discharged themselves over the 'honourable' members of the council, who had but a moment before been gloating over the assistance rendered them by the insurgents. Peasants and town populace once more made common cause against the honourable councillors, and the decree went forth that 'all of them must have their heads cut off,' as they had long merited. In a second riot the council was completely overthrown, and a fresh council consisting of popular members instituted in its place. Complete anarchy reigned in the town; the convents also were now plundered, and the few remaining clergy driven out; every owner of property was in danger of losing what belonged to him. Münzer incited the Christian Brothers of Erfurt to a war of extermination 'against the tyrants and the great grandees.'[1]

[1] The proceedings in Erfurt are admirably depicted by Kampschulte, ii. 208–214. See Krause, *Eobanus Hessus*, i. 401, 402. Riggenbach, pp. 232–238. Zimmermann, ii. 626–630.

'Do you think,' asked Münzer, who had come to Frankenhausen with his army, of the Lutheran-minded Count Albrecht von Mansfeld, 'do you think that God the Lord cannot enable his foolish and ignorant people to dethrone the tyrants? Ezekiel foretold how God would summon all the birds of heaven to eat the flesh of the mighty, and that the beasts of the field would drink the blood of the princes of the earth. If you will acknowledge that God has put power in the hands of the community, and appear before us and renounce your faith, we will be reconciled to you and receive you and look upon you as a brother; but if not we will pay no more heed to your canting behaviour, but will fight against you as against an arch-enemy of the Christian faith.'

'Go to, thou wretched, needy wormbag,' he said at the same time in a letter to the Catholic Count Ernst von Mansfeld, 'who has made thee to be a prince over the people, whom God has redeemed with his precious blood?' The Count was informed that he must at once appear in the peasants' camp, and show whether he was a Christian by apologising for his manifest tyranny, and declare who had made him so insolent and such a heathen villain. 'If, however, you do not come forward and exonerate yourself from the accusations made against you, I will denounce you before all the world, so that all the Brethren shall be free to seek your life, as they would that of a Turk; thus shall you be persecuted and destroyed. The living and eternal God has decreed that you shall be thrown down from your seat by means of the power which He has committed unto us; for you are of no use to Christianity, you are a destructive scourge of the friends of God. Your nest

shall be torn down and rent in pieces. We must have an answer to-day, or else in the name of God we will chastise you with our legions. Know therefore what you have to expect. We shall forthwith set about that which God has commanded us, whatever you may do. I am on my way.' Both letters were signed: 'Thomas Münzer, with the sword of Gideon.'

Münzer had made known to the peasants in all the villages of the neighbourhood that if they did not come of their own accord they would be fetched. Whole troops of them marched out to Frankenhausen, leading their wives and children with them, 'some weeping and groaning, others exulting and rejoicing, according as they had hope or fear for the issue of the proceedings.' The peasant army counted almost eight thousand men.

Meanwhile, however, the princes had equipped. The Landgrave Philip of Hesse, who had easily annihilated the insurgents in Hersfeld and Fulda,[1] joined his troops to those of Duke George of Saxony, Duke Henry of Braunschweig, and a few small neighbouring princes. The confederates advanced towards Frankenhausen with some five or six thousand soldiers in order to chastise those who had been guilty of 'slaughter, incendiarism, blasphemy of God, and other crimes.' The peasant troops, badly armed and ill supplied with artillery and other war equipments, had, by Münzer's orders, encamped on a hill and surrounded themselves with a fortification of wagons. Münzer cheered and encouraged them, and endeavoured to fill them with confidence of victory. 'The princes,' he exclaimed, 'are ruining the land and the people, and defending the

[1] See W. Falckenheimer, *Philipp der Grossmüthige im Bauernkriege.* First part, dissertation. Marburg, 1886.

false worship of the priests and the monks. God will destroy them as He did the Canaanites. Let not your weak flesh be affrighted, attack the enemy boldly. You see that God is on our side, He is giving us even now a signal. The rainbow, that you see in the heavens, signifies that God will help us, who have a rainbow on our banner. He threatens the murderous princes with justice and punishment. Therefore be unappalled, and prepare for defence. God does not will that you should make peace with the godless princes.' The peasants struck up the hymn, 'Come, Holy Ghost,' and awaited the attack of the enemy full of confidence and hope; but scarcely had their cavalry broken through the bulwark of wagons and struck down the foremost ranks, when the peasants dispersed in wild flight; about six thousand of them were shot down, or stabbed, 'quite piteously slaughtered;' of those who were seized in Frankenhausen about three hundred were decapitated. 'We have taken Frankenhausen,' wrote Landgrave Philip on May 16, the day after the battle, 'stabbed to death all the male persons found there, and plundered the town, and with the help of God obtained a victory for which we have cause to be very thankful to the Almighty, and we hope in this to have accomplished a good work.' [1]

Münzer, who had crept into a bed in Frankenhausen to hide himself, was discovered and brought before the princes. On being asked why he had misled so many men and brought them to misery, he answered defiantly that he had done right in undertaking to punish the princes because they were opposed to the Gospel.

[1] Philip's war report from Frankenhausen the Tuesday after Cantate (May 16).

To the Landgrave, who tried to prove to him by Bible texts that people should be obedient to the ruling powers, he made no answer. When the thumb-screws were applied to him, Duke George, on hearing his cries of anguish, remarked to him: 'This gives you pain, Thomas, but the poor people who have been stabbed on account of what you egged them on to, have suffered still more pain.' Münzer answered with a wild laugh: 'They did not wish it to be otherwise.'

Münzer confessed that he had intended to take possession of the land for fifty miles round Mühlhausen, to capture Hesse also, to put all Christians on an equal footing, and to drive away or put to death all princes and lords who refused to uphold the 'Evangel' and to join his league.

During his imprisonment he appears to have changed his mind. In a letter to the inhabitants of Mühlhausen in which he exhorted them to submission to the authorities, he says in conclusion: 'This would I have proclaimed as my farewell words, in order to remove the burden and load from my soul, that no more occasion shall be given for insurrection, so that innocent blood may no more be shed.'[1] He retracted all his erroneous opinions, repented above all 'of having preached much too violently against the ruling powers and of having had recourse to wanton insurrection and turbulence.' He also expressed his sorrow for having stirred up and misled the people by preaching many erroneous opinions against the most venerable Sacrament of the Holy Body of Christ, and also against other ordinances of the universal Christian Church. He desired, he said, to return to the fold of this same

[1] Seidemann, *Thomas Münzer*, p. 146.

Holy Christian Church and to die as a true and reconciled member of it, and entreated for God's sake that the Church would testify this of him before God and the world, and would pray to God for him, and would grant him brotherly forgiveness. Finally, he begged also 'that all his property might be made over to his wife and child.' He prepared himself devoutly for death, confessed after the Catholic manner, and received the Holy Communion in one kind. Before he breathed his last he made public confession of all his wrong-doing, but at the same time he exhorted the princes who were standing round to be merciful and just to their subjects, so that for the future they might not be exposed to such evil; he bade them take to heart the examples of the downfall of tyrants which were to be found in the books of Samuel and the Kings.[1]

Münzer's associate, Pfeiffer, who had been captured near Eisenach with nearly a hundred of his followers, died also by the hand of the executioner; but his was 'a defiant death,' without preparation, without repentance, and without the Sacrament.

Meanwhile the allied princes, to whom the new Elector John of Saxony had joined himself, had made themselves masters of Mühlhausen: the citizens were compelled to present themselves in the camp bare-headed and barefoot, with white staves in their hands, and to deliver up the keys of the town; the town was obliged to submit itself, with reservation of the rights of the emperor and the empire, to the Elector, Duke George, and to the Landgrave Philip; to pay 40,000 gulden as a war indemnity, besides a specified yearly

[1] See Seidemann, *Thomas Münzer*, p. 92, and Enders, *Luther's Briefe*, p. 177.

tribute; to pull down the towers, walls, and fortification works; to restore all their property to the clergy, to pay up the tithes, and to make compensation to the nobles for the losses they had suffered. In a short time some of the princes had succeeded in completely quelling the insurection within their own dominions. In Langensalza forty insurgents died on the scaffold; in Erfurt the original council was restored to office, and it proceeded, without mercy, against the very men whom a short time before it had welcomed as brethren and made use of as tools for its scandalous policy.

'It is heart-rending that the poor creatures should be thus cruelly dealt with,' wrote Luther on May 23 and 30 concerning the punishment of the peasants, 'but what are we to do? It is necessary, and moreover it is the will of God, that the people should be brought to feel some sort of fear and awe; otherwise Satan might do much worse things. This much mercy we will wish the peasants, that if there are innocent ones among them, God will save and protect them as He did Lot and Jeremiah. If He does not, then we may be sure that they are not innocent, but have at any rate kept silence and approved of the insurrection; even if they should have done this out of fear and cowardice, it is nevertheless wrong and punishable in God's sight, as much as it is to deny Christ from fear. And I write all the more strongly against the peasants for this reason, that they force their timid brethren to join in their turbulence and to incur the punishment of God.' 'Peasants are no better than straw. They will not hear the Word and they are without sense; therefore they must be compelled to hear the crack of the whip and the whizz of bullets,

and it is only what they deserve. We must pray for them that they may become obedient; but if they do not, pity is of no avail here; we must let the cannon-balls whistle among them, or they will only make things a thousand times worse.' 'Whoever has seen Münzer may truly say that he has seen the devil incarnate in his most fiendish aspect. O Lord God, where there exists such a spirit as this among the peasants also, it is high time that they should be strangled like mad dogs!' He used to say that it gave him pleasure to hear himself called a hypocrite and a flatterer of princes on account of his new pamphlet against the peasants —he counted it a matter for boasting.[1]

This new pamphlet was entitled: 'Wider die mörderischen und räuberischen Rotten der Bauern.'[2]

The Christian authorities, he urged, should furthermore make overtures towards an understanding with the peasants (although indeed they were not worth it), and whenever their advances were repulsed they must at once have recourse to the sword; the insurgents had manifoldly deserved death both of body and soul for having acted as treacherous, perjured, lying, disobedient scamps and villains.' Not the magistrates only, however, but every individual in the nation ought to join in the slaughter of the insurgents. For a seditious human being, who can be convicted of being such, is under divine and imperial ban, 'so that any one who can and will strangle him, has a right to do so. For each one is both judge and executioner over a notorious insurgent.' 'Therefore let whoever can, fall upon them, throttle and stab them, openly or secretly, and

[1] De Wette, ii. 666, 669–671.

[2] 'Against the murderous robber-hordes of peasants.'

consider that there can be nothing more pestilential, injurious, or diabolical than a rebel. It is just the same as with a mad dog: if you do not destroy it, it will destroy you, and a whole people as well.' Every ruler who does not chastise 'with death' becomes guilty of all the slaughter and evil that has been committed; for this is the time for the sword and for wrath, not for grace. Luther was not generally of opinion that heaven could be won by prayer and by good works; now, however, he wrote: 'Such wonderful times are these that a prince may become worthy of heaven through shedding of blood, more easily than others through prayer.' 'Therefore, dear lords, stab, strike, slaughter, wherever you can. If you meet with death in consequence—well-a-day, you can never have a more blessed death.'[1]

'What a murder-cry I raised with my little book against the peasants!' wrote Luther on June 15 to Johann Rühel and two other friends; 'it's all forgotten now, what God did for the world through my instrumentality. Lords, priests, peasants, are all against me now and threaten me with death.' Since they were all 'mad and idiotic,' he would be still more 'mad and idiotic;' he intended to get married.[2] On June 17 he invited a friend to his wedding feast.

Just as Luther declared his marriage to be a work

[1] *Collected Works*, xxiv. 288–294.

[2] Concerning Luther's pamphlet against the peasants Capito wrote to Bugenhagen on October 8, 1525: 'Depeculatam plebem prorsus vitae nudant pessimi tyranni, qui sibi ad perdendum afflictos *calcar subjectum putant per libellos Martini*, vestris haud dubium regionibus opportune scriptos, nostris autem rebus perniciosissimos. . . . Nos animum Lutheri commodissime interpretamur, sed verbis tantum, ne quid suspicionis de suborto inter nos dissidio videri possit.' Bugenhagen's *Briefwechsel*, p. 34.

of the Almighty, so he also attributed his pamphlet against the peasants to divine inspiration. It was by divine command, he said, that he had come forward against the latter; those who complained of him and blamed him were partisans of the insurgents.[1] 'Those who thus blame my little book,' he said in a missive to the Mansfeld Chancellor Caspar Müller, 'must be warned to hold their tongues and to take care what they're about; for most certainly they are insurgents at heart. For those who pity, befriend, and justify the insurgents, whom God does not pity, but wishes rather to see punished, must be reckoned among their number; for they show plainly that if they had means and opportunity they too would work ruin and disaster. Therefore the authorities must keep an eye on such people, and let them see that they are in earnest.'

'If they think such an answer too severe and say that their mouths have been stopped with violence, I say: That is as it should be. For an insurgent is not worthy of being answered with reason, for he cannot understand

[1] Luther wrote as follows to Amsdorf concerning this pamphlet: 'Ego vero non tam misereor nostrorum sciolorum, qui me judicantes suum simul spiritum sanguinarium et seditiosum produnt. Quare gaudeo sic Satanam indignari et blasphemare, quoties a me tangitur. Quid enim sunt nisi Satanae illae voces, quibus me et Evangelium traducere nititur? . . . Erit forte tempus, ut et mihi liceat dicere: Omnes vos scandalum patiemini in ista nocte. Ego sic sentio, melius esse omnes rusticos caedi, quam principes et magistratus, eo quod rustici sine auctoritate Dei gladium accipiunt. Quam nequitiam Satanae sequi non potest nisi mera satanica vastitas regni Dei, et mundi principes, etsi caedunt, tamen gladium auctoritate Dei gerunt. Ibi utrumque regnum consistere potest, quare nulla misericordia, nulla patientia rusticis debetur, sed ira et indignatio Dei et hominum iis, qui non acquiescunt monitis, nec oblatis condicionibus aequissimis cedunt, sed furore Satanae solo pergunt omnia miscere, quales sunt isti Thuringici et Franconici. Hos ergo justificare, horum misereri, illis favere, est Deum negare, blasphemare et de coelo velle dejicere.' De Wette, ii. 671–672.

it: such mouths must be stopped with fisticuffs till their noses bleed. The peasants would not hear, would not listen to reason, therefore it was necessary to startle their ears with bullets, and send their heads flying in the air. For such pupils such a rod is meet.' 'If they say that I am very hard and merciless, I answer: "Mercy be damned! we are speaking now of God's Word which says that kings must be honoured and rebels rooted out, and He is fully as merciful as we are." Therefore my little book is right, and will always be so though all the world should be incensed at it.' 'As I wrote then, so I write again: Let no one have pity on the stiff-necked, obstinate, misguided peasants, who would listen to no one, but let whoever can stab, strangle, and kill them, like mad dogs; and this must be done for the sake of those who have been ruined and misled by these rebel peasants, so that peace and security may be re-established.'

While a few weeks before he had declared that the unendurable tyranny of the princes and lords over the peasants was the sole cause of the insurrection, he said now that this war had been brought about by God's will, 'so that the peasants might be brought to see how much too well off they had been, and might repent that they had not enjoyed their good times in peace and contentment, and learn to thank God in future when they had to give up one cow so that they might enjoy the other in peace. The peasants had not realised how precious a boon peace and security were, and had not returned thanks to God for letting them eat and drink in cheerfulness and safety, and therefore God had been obliged to teach them in this manner.'

The ruling powers on their side must learn from

this peasant war to govern with firmness. When there was no government or organisation everything went to pieces. There was also no more respect and reverence among the people; each one did almost exactly what he liked. Nobody would give anything, but all wanted to gorge and swill and dress up and be idle, as if they were all great lords. A donkey requires the stick, and the people need to be ruled by force; God knew this well, and therefore he put a sword, and not a soft fox-tail, into the hands of the princes and rulers.'

At the end of his missive Luther reiterated once more: 'What I teach and write will remain true though all the world should cry out against it.'[1]

'It was I, Martin Luther,' he said many years later, 'who slew all the peasants in the insurrection, for I commanded them to be slaughtered; all their blood is on my head. But I throw the responsibility on our Lord God, who instructed me to give this order.'[2]

Already, before the battle of Frankenhausen, the Truchsess[3] Georg, at the head of the troops of the Suabian League, had gained a brilliant victory at Böblingen, on May 12, over a peasant army of from ten to twenty thousand men, and by this victory the insurrection was completely suppressed within the province of Würtemberg. Melchior Nonnenmacher, who had played the cornet at the murder of the Count von Helfenstein, and Jäcklein Rohrbach, who had given the first stab and then dressed himself in the Count's damask waistcoat and jeered at the Countess, were both

[1] 'Ein Sendbrief von dem harten Büchlein wider die Bauern,' *Collected Works*, xxiv. 295–319.

[2] *Collected Works*, lix. 284, 285. [3] An office at the Imperial Court.

taken prisoners, chained to trees, and slowly roasted. 'The punishments were in all cases as inhuman as the conduct of the peasants had been.' On May 17 the Alsatian insurgents were totally routed at Elsasszabern by Duke Anton of Lorraine, who looked upon the war as a religious crusade in defence of the Catholic Church; in the course of a few days nearly 20,000 peasants met with their death. 'It is quite true,' wrote the Bavarian Chancellor Leonhard von Eck on May 27, in heartless language, 'that the Duke has slain about 20,000 peasants: and the bodies were left lying one upon the other till they stank (if I may be allowed to say so), so that many women in the neighbourhood ran away, leaving their children behind them to die of hunger. Afterwards the said Duke massacred another 4,000 peasants, and then marched straight off to where another herd of them was in revolt, so that we may look forward soon to seeing perfect quiet established all along the Rhine.'[1] 'The villages stand empty,' wrote the Margrave Ernst von Baden to the council at Basle; 'the poor women and children are taking to flight, and there is great misery and lamentation.'[2] 'It will not be possible, however,' said the Alsatian peasants with truth, 'that the landlords should kill us all and live alone on the earth.' On May 18 Georg Truchsess, after again receiving the homage of the province of Würtemberg, marched to Weinsberg to avenge the atrocities of April 16. The town, 'with all its provisions of corn and cattle, was burnt to the ground;' on the place where

[1] See Vogt, *Die bayerische Politik*, p. 457. In the text, p. 81, Vogt erroneously makes Ludwig, the Elector of the Palatinate, the leader of the battle at Elsasszabern.

[2] Anselm, vi. 294.

the nobles had been slaughtered a chapel was built, in which a service for the dead, with ten holy Masses, was held yearly. Several other villages and hamlets in the neighbourhood of the town that were found in a state of rebellion were destroyed by fire.

Meanwhile Ludwig, Elector of the Palatinate, had gradually collected at Heidelberg, whither the Bishops of Würzburg and Spires had fled, an army of 1,000 cavalry and 3,000 foot-soldiers, provided with excellent artillery. Richard, Archbishop of Treves, had contributed 300 mounted and 1,500 foot-soldiers, and the Landgrave Philip of Hesse had sent 300 mounted soldiers from the town of Cleves under the command of a captain. On May 23 this contingent marched from Heidelberg out towards Bruchsal, where the officers of the Bruhrainers were quartered with 7,000 able-bodied men. A few of the town councillors and burgesses entered into negotiations with the Elector's Field-Marshal and promised unconditional surrender for themselves and the town, and opened the gates on May 25. The Bruhrainers were disarmed and sentenced to pay a fine of 40,000 gulden. Several of the ringleaders were beheaded. In the margraviate of Baden the insurrection was stopped by a treaty concluded on May 25.[1]

On May 28, at Fürfeld, between Hilsbach and Neckarsulm, a union was effected between the forces of the Palatinate of Treves and the Suabian League, and a collective army of 8,000 infantry and 2,500 cavalry was thus formed. 'Princes, knights, and warriors burnt with desire to put an end to the risings in Franconia, and were all glad at heart when the good news reached

[1] Hartfelder, *Bauernkrieg*, p. 190.

them that the peasants, though still full of boasting talk, were nevertheless helpless, and had in reality grown faint-hearted and were at variance among themselves.'

A Parliament of the People had been summoned to meet at Heilbronn, when the question of a new imperial constitution was to be considered; but as the assembly had not come off, the leaders of the united armies at Würzburg convoked a Diet at Schweinfurt in order to consider as to 'good ordinances, the establishment of the Word of God, peace and justice, and also specially to confer about the ruling powers.' The Diet was to begin on June 1, and all the allied princes, counts, and lords were, if possible, to appear at it in person; the towns and villages were each to be represented by two delegates. On the day before the writs were issued, May 26, the Franconian leaders had sent round an address under their own seal and that of the town of Würzburg, to all the electors, princes, and other Estates of the realm, to all magistrates, burgomasters, councillors, country judges, and parishes, demanding that they would afford them support in their 'evangelical work.' 'Seeing that we ought to render more obedience to Almighty God than to man,' they wrote, 'we have, in the name of God, formed ourselves into a friendly and brotherly league for the preservation of the Holy Gospel and for the maintenance of peace and justice. Furthermore we are minded to root out and exterminate all injurious castles and dens of robbers from which and in which violence, damage, and wrong have been done to trade and to the common people; as we have already done this with the help of God, so we shall go on, in order to establish and maintain general peace in the

streets and on the water-ways. Wherefore we beseech you in all humility and friendliness to grant us help and support in this Christian undertaking, and neither by action, nor in any other way, to hinder us from it.' [1]

These leaders had already previously decreed that the nobility must conform 'to the regulations and judgment of the whole brotherhood.' 'Also none of the nobles are to ride on horseback any more; they must go on foot, and in their food and other matters they must do just as others do; but they shall be allowed, when they want anything, to buy it with their own pennies. It is also the serious opinion of our whole body that none of the nobles must be allowed to retain their castles and mansions, but they must build, and dwell in, houses in towns and villages like other people. When, however, any one of the nobles wishes to pull down his habitation himself and to use anything in it according to his own desires, this shall be allowed him. But if any of them have an overplus of corn and grain, it is the unanimous opinion of the brotherhood that this should be applied to the common service and good of the whole body.' [2]

The haughtiness and arrogance of the insurgents and incendiaries, however, was to come to an end. Those who had aided and abetted them before the princes had taken up arms against them, now either remained passive or fell away in terror, and nothing came of the meeting at Schweinfurt, which only a few people attended, and which dispersed like spray in the wind at the sound of the cannon-balls.

It was in vain that the Franconian peasants implored

[1] Lorenz Fries, i. 294, 295; Wieland, pp. 73, 74; Bensen, pp. 342–344.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 205.

help of Duke Ulrich of Würtemberg (who was in league with their brotherhood), assuring him that they numbered from twenty to thirty thousand men. Vainly also they appealed for support to the towns of Heilbronn and Nuremberg. Formerly the Nuremberg town council had kept silence while the peasants were providing themselves in the town with ammunition and provender, and when, on May 14, the peasants had asked what they had to expect from Nuremberg in case of their marching into Southern Franconia with an armed force, the council had answered: 'It was well known how loyally they (the members of the council) adhered to the evangelical teaching, and the peasants would have nothing to fear from the council so long as they made no attack on the town.' Now, however, after the victory of the Truchsess and the allied princes, the council wrote to the peasants that their proceedings were not evangelical but diabolical.[1] Heilbronn assumed a hostile attitude towards the 'Christian' allied brethren.

In the camp of the insurgents themselves there reigned confusion and discord. 'Among the armies of the peasants,' wrote Ehrenfried Kumpf of Rotenburg, 'there is neither peace, obedience, unity, loyalty, nor faith. Everything that they have sworn, vowed, agreed to, and subscribed to-day is repudiated on the morrow, despised, and overthrown.'[2] The peasants were forsaken by their own leaders. Götz von Berlichingen—who, according to a resolution of the camp of Würtemberg, was to hinder the junction of the army of the League with the princes, and to come to the rescue of

[1] See Oechsle, pp. 116, 190; Bensen, pp. 361, 362.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 410, *n.* 1.

the peasants in the district of Sulm—made his escape secretly from Adolzfurt on the night of May 29, at the very moment when the bloody crisis was at hand. His treachery was the signal for the dissolution of the army.[1] Georg Metzler also, the other 'Field-Marshal of the Christian Brotherhood,' on the very day (June 2) when the allied forces of the League and the Palatinate came face to face with the peasants of the Neckarthal and the Oberwald at Königshofen, sought safety in flight before the beginning of the battle.

This battle fought at Königshofen against a mob of 'leaderless, terrified peasants, was just like a boar-hunt.' 'The peasants threw away their weapons; those who kept them in their hands did not know how to use them; they had a great many hand-guns, but from fear and trembling did not know what to do with them, and they thought their best weapon was flight: the result was a most disastrous pursuit. One small company which had repaired to a forest and prepared for defence by barricading itself was shot down by the foot-soldiers; many of them were shot down from the trees up which they had climbed, and about 1,300 were speared and trampled on by the horses. About 3,000 peasants were killed, and 300 taken prisoners; all their artillery and implements of war were seized.'

On June 3 the town of Mergentheim surrendered unconditionally, and on the 4th the Franconian peasant troops under command of Florian von Geyer at Ingolstadt, southwards from Würzburg, were completely scattered. 'In the village and castle of Ingolstadt,'

[1] See Wegele, pp. 159–164; Von Stalin, iv. 304, 305, *n.* 3.

Schärtlin von Burtenbach relates in his autobiography: 'We slew 4,000 peasants. Out of these, 400 took refuge in the ruins of the burnt-down castle, and made a stout defence; but they were overpowered by us, nearly all of them stabbed, and the remainder burnt to death in a church near by.'[1]

On June 7 Würzburg surrendered.

'The peasants have not kept their word to us,' wrote Gilz Halberg from Würzburg to his father, one of the town councillors at Hall, on June 8; 'they said they would get possession of the castle without our help and would leave us undisturbed in the town; they only asked that we should supply them with bread and wine outside, for payment of money. But they kept none of their promises.' 'Then suddenly his lordship came upon them with four princes. They were in terrible fear and anxiety lest they should be compelled to surrender unconditionally. Some of them had their heads chopped off, and afterwards fines of ten guldens were taken from some who must have been innocent. All their weapons and armour were taken up to the castle, and they were compelled to swear allegiance again to his lordship. And my lord has now only two castles left that are whole.' 'And now the Bund is lying here and devastating the land, so that not much more will be left in it. Thus we are all paupers. God knows that. I cannot write any more now for sheer dejection.' 'Item, twelve miles round Würzburg,' says Halberg in an enclosed note, 'more than 120 castles, most of which were held in fief by my gracious lord, have been burnt down, and nearly forty cloisters; item, my lord has been robbed

[1] *Lebensbeschreibung des Ritters Sebastian Schärtlin von Burtenbach* (Frankfort, 1777), p. 14.

of about 3,000 fuders[1] of wine and at least 10,000 *malters*[2] of corn.'

In Franconia 232 castles and 52 cloisters were either plundered, pulled down, or completely burnt.

'Item, my gracious lord's secretary,' Halberg goes on, 'has told me to-day that it has already cost milord of Würzburg 300,000 guldens, without counting what it will still cost him to get the people out of the country. Item, one suburb on the other side of the Main has already been pillaged. I know not how much further things will go. Item, this very day near thirty-six men have had their heads cut off, five of them burghers, and the others humble citizens and peasants, who had acted as captains and standard-bearers; and the council and aldermen have been taken prisoners; God only knows what will be done with them.' 'Sixty leaders have been beheaded; the burghers were compelled to pay 8,000 guldens and to pull down the walls and towers of the town opposite the castle. The disarmed peasants had white staffs put into their hands and were let go, but on their way home many of them were stabbed by the horse and foot soldiers of the regular army. 'As then many dead bodies lay about in the vineyards, in the roads, and in the ditches, it was a piteous and terrible sight to see.'

But the most ghastly punishments of all were inflicted at Anspach-Baireuth by Casimir, Margrave of Brandenburg, who at first had been zealous for the Lutheran doctrine, and, shortly before the outbreak of the revolution, had appointed two preachers to 'plant the Gospel in the land.' When the revolution broke out in

[1] A measure of wine containing 6 ohms.

[2] A measure of corn equal to several bushels.

East Franconia and invaded his territory, 'Casimir equipped himself mightily and gallantly defeated several bands of peasants, but on the whole his plan was to wait and see on which side there was most luck and most profit to be had.' The town of Kitzingen had taken up arms 'for the holy Evangel,' and contributed two companies to the Franconian peasant troops; in Neustadt on the Aisch, which was in league with the peasants, all the Margrave's possessions and all ecclesiastical property were plundered. In all the villages in the jurisdiction of Hoheneck the Mass vestments, chalices, and bells were sold out of the churches and with the money thus realised firearms and halberds were procured; many cloisters and castles were destroyed by fire. Casimir, however, still remained passive at Onolzbach. It was not till May 6 that he sallied forth from thence with a small armed force to relieve Wassertrüdingen. This place, however, had already been taken possession of by the rebels. On this same day the peasants of the Margraviate joined with those of Oettingen in pillaging the large and wealthy Benedictine abbey of Auhausen. 'The stately convent house, only just newly built, and the richly adorned church were ravaged in the most barbarous manner; the images of the saints were smashed and broken to pieces, the costly metal and stone work, the monuments to the dead, the organs, the exquisitely painted windows were all reduced to fragments; the richly ornamented books for divine service, the rare treasures of the valuable cloister library, were torn up and thrown into the streams.' When the cloister had been thoroughly cleared out, the savage bands, richly laden with booty, made off for Heidenheim, to attack and pillage

the market and cloister there. Here, however, they encountered the troops of the Margrave and were beaten near Ostheim. Upon this Casimir returned to his capital on May 9. Then he took up a kind of reconnoitring position near Markt-Erlbach and entered into eager negotiations with the leaders of the peasants at Würzburg. On May 10 Count Wilhelm von Henneburg, who supported the peasants and was a zealous adherent of the new Gospel, had represented to the Margrave how easy it would now be, with the help of the peasants and the Landgrave of Hesse, to transform the bishopric of Würzburg into a secular principality and to make a Brandenburg Margrave into a Duke of Franconia. The chancellor Eck, who was very hostilely disposed towards Casimir, wrote to his liege lord on May 25: I have received the intelligence to-day from a place where they know all about the matter, that the Margrave at first connived at the insurrection and was in hopes of improving his own position by any losses which might occur to the Bishops of Würzburg, Bamberg, and Nuremberg. Secret emissaries, employed by the Town Council of Nuremberg, in the peasants' camp before Würzburg, reported that the peasants were favourably disposed towards the Margrave, and did not intend to make a raid on the Margrave but only on Nuremberg; on May 17 the insurgents were still firmly convinced that Casimir would agree to the twelve articles and would soon 'be a Christian brother.'[1]

But the achievements of the Palatine army, its alliance with that of the Suabian League, and above all the battle of Königshofen, altered the whole situation of

[1] See Jörg, pp. 610–615. Bensen, pp. 345, 385–401, 404. Catalogue of the castles and cloisters that were destroyed, p. 566.

affairs. Casimir now let loose 'with fire and sword' against the rebel burghers and peasants, and he 'massacred men, women, and children.'[1] On June 9 he caused fifty-eight burghers at Kitzingen to have their eyes publicly put out by the hangman, amid the wailing and lamentation of women and children; and many others had their fingers chopped off.[2] Many of the poor eyeless victims died very soon, the others were banished, after having first been deprived of all they possessed, to a spot ten miles distant from Kitzingen, 'and they wandered about afterwards in the country, presenting a melancholy spectacle, holding each other by the hands and begging as they went.' 'The Margrave has all the captains of the rebel army beheaded,' wrote a prebendary of Onolzbach to a relation at Hall on June 8; 'he has them stabbed, robbed of their goods and chattels, and burnt to death. He has burnt down numbers of villages, and is still going on with his incendiary work and his terrible punishments. Whenever he comes across one of the insurgents, he has his head chopped off, or his fingers. He has taken from the peasants all their cannons, firearms, and provender, and 150 wagons laden with booty which the peasants had taken from the

[1] See Lorenz Fries, ii. 22, 36.

[2] Hieronymus Hammer, citizen of Kitzingen, gives an exact list of those whose eyes were put out, Wieland, pp. 151, 152. 'All that they had about them when they were seized, money or what not, was bestowed on Meister Augustin (the hangman); so that he made all the greater haste with them, that nothing might escape him.' Holzwart relates as follows: 'Plerique, antequam oculis privarentur, rogabant, uti potius vel strangularentur vel decollarentur, se enim potius optare mortem, quam tam miseram et lumine orbatam ducere vitam, sed nullus vel ad graviora vel ad leviora supplicia exorari poterat; ajebat enim (the Margrave) illos jurasse, se ne quidem aspecturos marchionem, igitur se illorum votis consulturum, ne, si quando se aspiciant, perjuri fiant.' Baumann, *Quellen*, p. 685.

cloisters, castles, and churches; great treasures, as I saw with my own eyes.' In order to pay his soldiers the Margrave took away all the money, jewels, and silver vessels belonging to the churches under his suzerainty.

On June 13 Casimir joined forces before Schweinfurt with the army of the Suabian League commanded by Truchsess Georg, which had started from Würzburg the day before. The town surrendered and each citizen pledged himself to pay ten guldens as compensation for pillaging. Count Wilhelm von Henneberg, who had broken off his alliance with the peasants, received 5,000 guldens for damages. In the bishopric of Bamberg, on May 23, 'the appointed leaders and the committee of the towns and the district of the Bishopric of Bamberg proclaimed their resolution not to leave standing a single castle or nobleman's seat from which either they themselves or their forbears had suffered injury or oppression, but to pull down or burn them all.'[1] The bishop, as he informed the Truchsess, 'was to such an extent harassed and hedged in by his vassals that he and the cathedral chapter scarcely knew if they were alive or dead;' but at the approach of the army of the League 'all the strength of the insurgents melted away.' Four hundred citizens of Bamberg fled to Nuremberg, and on June 19 the council and the community of the town renewed their oaths of allegiance to the bishop and entered into an agreement whereby all the clergy were to be reinstated in their possessions and privileges, all treasures stolen out of the churches were to be restored, tithes, interest, and dues were to be paid up according

[1] See von Höfler, *Fränkische Studien*, viii. 268, No. 157, Schreiben an Nürnberg vom Dienstag nach Vocem Jucunditatis (May 23).

to customary regulations, and all weapons were to be delivered up; with regard to any complaints against the bishop the townspeople were to be satisfied with the decision of the imperial tribunal or the Suabian League. Twelve of the ringleaders were beheaded in the market-place; nine aiders and abettors of the insurrection were deprived of their possessions.[1] In short, the rising was put down throughout the whole of the bishopric.

On June 22 the Margrave Casimir received from the commander-in-chief of the army of the League full authority to use the most severe measures of retaliation in the town of Rotenburg and the district under its jurisdiction—'slaughter, seizure, incendiarism, and plunder; and also to punish in all other necessary ways, according to circumstances and the guilt of individuals.'

The revolution party in this town had been in the utmost state of depression since the defeat of the peasants at Königshofen, and the burgomaster and the town council had got the upper hand. On June 7 the council sent an embassy into the camp of the Truchsess at Heidingsfeld. 'Ay, are you coming? Are you cringing and humbling yourselves at last?' the soldiers called out to the ambassadors; 'it's verily time, and we should have come ourselves otherwise and given you your deserts.' The town agreed to the following terms: that each house within the city walls should pay seven guldens, making 4,000 guldens in all, and that an additional 1,000 guldens should be contributed for war indemnities, and that the peasants should be handed over to the League for punishment. Squire Stephan von Menzingen, one of the chief promoters of the insurrection, who had sought safety in flight, was caught

[1] Bensen, pp. 456–458. *Histor.-polit. Blätter*, pp. 95, 902.

by the town police and shut up in the tower. 'Help, help, citizens!' he cried out; 'help, help, ye Christian brothers!' but the people answered: 'Dear friend, the Brotherhood is at an end.' Casimir's efforts to procure the release of this man, with whom he had stood on the most intimate relations, were fruitless. On June 28 the Margrave made his entry into the town with 2,000 men, and ordered a list of the insurgent leaders to be drawn up for him by the magistrate. At the head of this list were the preacher Deuschlin, the blind monk, and Carlstadt; next came the squire Von Menzingen, and then Ehrenfried Kumpf, who had been guilty of supporting Carlstadt, and of accepting the post of magistrate at Würzburg, and then plotting the destruction of three castles. At the end of the list figured sixty-three citizens who had 'spoken against the Emperor, the princes and the lords, the town council, and all ruling authorities, and had openly threatened to let the peasants into the town, to ransack the houses of the town councillors, the city magnates, and other wealthy burghers, and to divide their property among themselves. Many of the burghers, Ehrenfried Kumpf among the number, had effected a timely escape; Carlstadt also had saved himself by flight.[1] On June 30,

[1] Carlstadt's own account of his flight is worth notice. 'At Thüngersheim, between Würzburg and Carlstadt,' so he relates, 'I fell in with a group of peasants, armed with guns and other weapons, who said they had learnt from their comrades that a certain person named Carlstadt would travel past that spot with his wife, and that they intended taking from him all he possessed. At Stetten, two and a half miles from Carlstadt, a peasant recognised me and said that Luther and I had injured the peasants; but I got away from him and his companions by means of fair speeches.' At a short distance from Thüngen the peasants attempted to rob him of his property. At Framersbach 'several robbers from among the peasants, who knew me well, and who were also known at Carlstadt, consulted together and decided, on the eve of Trinity Sunday,

after the council and the community had sworn a fresh oath of allegiance, ten burghers were beheaded in the public market-place. When the Margrave Casimir made another attempt to obtain the acquittal of Menzingen, Deuschlin, and the blind monk, the council informed him that they could not accede to his wish, for 'it would be an act of great injustice to the ten who had been executed the day before, to absolve from punishment the three men who had been the originators and the chief promoters of the insurrection.' Casimir was obliged to give up his *protégés*: they were beheaded the next day, and four more burghers and two peasant leaders with them. The execution of these offenders was followed by a series of terrible penalties inflicted by the magistrates. A preacher of the neighbourhood who had made the peasants believe that 'he could produce a fog, under cover of which three hundred men might secretly be brought into the town,' was placed in the pillory, branded, and scourged with rods. Many of those who had been condemned had their eyes put out or their fingers chopped off. The house of the cloth-shearer Kilian Etschlich, which had been the meeting-place of the insurgents, was pulled down, and

June 10, that they would either fasten me to a tree in the Spesserwald or else throttle me and take all that belonged to me and my wife.' This intention, however, was betrayed to Carlstadt, and he eluded his enemies by taking another route. (See Steitz on *Gerhard Westerburg*, pp. 69, 70.) Through the instrumentality of Luther Carlstadt obtained permission to remain in Saxony on condition of his retracting all his teaching and abstaining from further preaching or writing. He took up his abode first in Segrena, and later on in Kemberg, where he drove a retail business in brandy and wine. The general opinion that in his later years he ceased his attempts at enforcing his doctrines on the Eucharist is erroneous; see his 'Rechtfertigungsschrift in Betreff der Abendmahlslehre,' addressed to the Chancellor Brück, in Weimar, August 12, 1528, in the *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie*, pp. 7, 99–112.

its site was covered with salt. For more than a hundred years 'the accursed site,' as it was called, remained an object of terror to the people. Ehrenfried Kumpf had his money restored to him, minus a fine of 400 gulden; but he was not allowed to return to Rotenburg, and he died in a state of insanity. Misery became universal.

The Truchsess Georg meanwhile had marched across the Ries into the Algäu, and in conjunction with Georg von Frundsberg, who had brought him a reinforcement of some thousand landsknechts, he had, in July, compelled the insurgent peasants to lay down their arms and to deliver up the ringleaders. The villages were mercilessly burnt down. In the Hegau, on July 16, the peasants suffered a severe defeat at Hilzingen from Max Sittich von Hohenems and Count Felix von Werdenberg. In the Klettgau it was not till November that the waves of revolt finally subsided; the town of Waldshut, 'from which the whole war had originally proceeded,' was captured at the beginning of December. In the districts of the Maine and the Rhine it was the allied army of the Palatinate of Treves, which had left Würzburg on June 13, which suppressed the last remnants of insurrection. On May 15 the confederate princes, who had been joined by Wilhelm, Bishop of Strassburg, Stattholder of Mayence, at the head of a hundred mounted soldiers, came to an agreement together with regard to the levying of contributions throughout the archbishopric of Mayence, with the result that the whole diocese was assessed in a lump and the contributions divided. The princes had intended marching on Mayence and the Rheingau, but through the mediation of the Stattholder a treaty was concluded with the peasants, by

which, among other things, it was stipulated that the Rheingauers should renew their oaths of allegiance, and should pay a fine of 15,000 gold guldens. At Pfeddersheim, where this treaty was concluded, delegates from Frankfort on the Maine had been present.

It seems that on June 18 the electors of Treves and of the Palatinate and the Stattholder of Mayence had addressed to the Frankfort town council a threatening letter to the effect that 'whereas numbers of insurgents from towns and provinces had taken refuge at Frankfort, and were still under shelter there, and whereas many of the nobles and the clergy in the town of Frankfort had been robbed of their property, they, the undersigned, demanded that the latter should have their goods and chattels restored to them, and that the fugitive insurgents should be delivered up. If both these requests were not complied with, the town' (so the letter threatened) 'would be dealt with as an accomplice in the peasants' war.' The envoys, sent by the Frankfort council with its answer to the princes, learnt on their way that Mayence and the Rheingau had surrendered, and that on June 23 the princes' mounted troops had killed 1,500 peasants, seized 100 wagons and all the guns of the insurgents, and had stormed Pfeddersheim on the following day. When the envoys arrived at Pfeddersheim on June 25 the princes notified to them that the proceedings at Frankfort with regard to certain 'Articles' which were in direct opposition to his Imperial Majesty, to the public peace, and to all justice and right, had become generally known. It was no secret, they were told, that the town council itself had set its seal to the 'Articles'

which had been printed and distributed in the neighbouring principalities and provinces; and this was tantamount to saying, 'Henceforth, dear brethren, follow in our track! we are pursuing the right road; we have opened out a pathway for you!'

This reproach was not without foundation. The Frankfort 'Articles' had served as models for the insurgents of Mayence, Worms, Spires (presumably also of Cologne), and even of Münster and Westphalia.[1]

The scandals that had occurred at Frankfort in connection with the desecration of the sacraments and the deposition of the clergy were also complained of to the envoys. The princes expressed themselves willing to believe that the town council had not at heart approved of all these proceedings, but that they had been coerced; nevertheless, they said, they must insist on the instigators, and all responsible persons, being punished, and on the 'Articles' being cancelled; otherwise they would feel themselves constrained to pitch their camps outside Frankfort, and themselves punish the offenders, as they had done elsewhere. After lengthy negotiations the council, on July 2, gave the princes the following solemn assurance: 'By our true faith and loyalty we have consented and promised, as is notified in this letter, to renounce and abolish all the latest and newly drawn-up articles and compacts which have been concluded with the clergy, and the commonalty, in the town of Frankfort, and to consider them henceforth as dead letters.'

The table of articles was to be delivered over to the palatine elector, and the clergy were to be reinstated 'in all respects in their former condition and status, with

[1] See Steitz, *Eberhard Westerburg*, pp. 104, 105.

all their customary privileges, tithes, dues, rents, and so forth,' just as these had existed prior to the insurrection and all those proceedings which had disturbed the public peace. 'To this end we will in such wise order our affairs that henceforth insurrections and all proceedings and horrors of this sort shall no more happen, but shall as much as possible be prevented.'[1]

The articles were destroyed, but the clergy were not restored to their former status. The Stattholder of Mayence, who had made his entry into Mayence on July 1, and had reduced the town to submission, wrote to the Archbishop of Treves on July 7: 'We have received trustworthy evidence and information that the people of Frankfort, in spite of their treaty and promises, are still harbouring among them, and intend to go on harbouring, three of those Lutheran preachers from whom all the disturbances in Frankfort have hitherto arisen. I leave it to your Grace to imagine what good end can be served by their being allowed to have their own way in this matter. It is imperative that provision be made to prevent further mischief.' Towards the end of April the town council had already been busying itself with the appointment of preachers of the new doctrines. 'On July 4, on the Day of Pentecost,' we read in the diary of Wolfgang Königstein, canonicus at the *Liebfrauenstift*, 'the council appointed a Lutheran preacher, a renegade monk, to preach in our church in the afternoon. On Whit Monday this monk preached again in the afternoon, also on the Tuesday, and one of the same sort preached also at St. Leonhard.' These two preachers were Dionysius Melander and Johann Algersheimer. 'They both of them,' writes Königstein,

[1] *Aufruhrbuch*, pp. 36-41. See Kraus, pp. 81-83.

'fiercely attacked the Pope and the priesthood, and spoke with great contempt of the most high and holy Sacrament, and all the ceremonies of the Church, especially the mass.' The council indeed, long after the revolution of 1525 had been suppressed, was perfectly helpless against the dissolute and turbulent conduct of the preachers, who were backed up by the populace. When the Archbishop of Mayence called for their removal the council answered: 'We humbly pray that your Grace will deign to have pity on us; for we are unable to expel these preachers except at great risk and peril. We have hitherto, as far as possible, quelled all turbulence without bloodshed, and we are convinced that these preachers will not quietly submit to being deposed.'[1]

While in the Empire, during the months of May and June, the insurgents had sustained disastrous defeats, in the Tyrol they were still masters of the situation: they had captured over a hundred castles, and were the arbiters of life and death, of money and property. There was no possibility of resisting them, for the Archduke Ferdinand had no military force, and no means of levying soldiers. At a provincial Diet held at Innsbruck on June 15 the Archduke was presented with a list of one hundred and six 'Articles' embodying the claims put forward by an assembly of burghers and peasants at Meran.

'On the face of things many of these stipulations appeared to be to the advantage of the prince.' Ferdinand, for instance, was requested to undertake a

[1] See in the *Anhang zum Tagebuche Königsteins*, pp. 203, 204, what the Archbishop told the deputies of the town council concerning the proceedings of those preachers.

general secularisation of ecclesiastical territory, and, as liege lord of the district, to proceed without delay to incorporate with his dominions, as hereditary fiefs, all the lands which the Bishops of Brixen and Trient held immediately under the Empire, as well as all the remaining Church property, and all the possessions which foreign abbeys and cloisters owned in the Tyrol. Michael Geismayr, the chief originator of the insurrection, assumed the title 'Augmenter of his Princely Highness's dominions.' A large proportion of the nobility, either under compulsion or else in the hope of getting their share of the Church lands, associated themselves with the insurgent peasants and burghers, and advocated the secularisation scheme proposed by the peasant and municipal delegates at the provincial Diet. 'I fear,' wrote Duke Ludwig of Bavaria to his brother Duke Wilhelm, in June 1525, 'that the Tyrolese people, though seeming to aim at the advantage of the Duke, will end in becoming themselves the rulers, and that he will have to do whatever they bid him. I am sure no good will come of it all.'

But Ferdinand firmly rejected the secularisation scheme, and as firmly refused his sanction to the promulgation of the so-called 'unadulterated Word of God,' and to the appointment and deposition of the clergy by the community. 'The Archduke is interesting himself keenly in the clergy,' wrote a Bavarian agent to Munich, 'which is quite against the interests of the peasantry.' 'The Bishops of Trient and Brixen,' said Ferdinand, 'were princes of the Empire, and no change must be attempted in their status without the knowledge of the head of the Empire; the Tyrolese counts

were responsible to the latter for the protection of those bishoprics. If he (Ferdinand) were to rob the foreign ecclesiastical princes, prelates, and cloisters of all their possessions in the Tyrol, he would bring on a war with the Suabian League, the princes of Bavaria, the Count Palatine, and all the estates of the Empire. Neither had he any right to deal at his pleasure with those ecclesiastical possessions that were not subject to the Empire; for they stood under the chartered protection of the Emperor. Besides which it would not be in conformity with the Gospel, but very greatly in opposition to it, to deprive any individual of his possessions, or his hereditary prestige, by violence.' At the same time Ferdinand saw himself compelled by pressure of circumstances to take the bishopric of Brixen and the territory of the Teutonic Knights under temporary secular control, 'pending the convocation of a general Christian council or the reform of the Holy Empire; but the spiritual jurisdiction and authority were left unconditionally in the hands of the Bishop of Brixen.'[1] Ferdinand also gave his assent to a new code of land regulations (by which the rebels obtained increased securities), and also to several changes in the imperial constitution which were favourable to the burghers and peasants.[2] The resolutions of the provincial diet which were proclaimed on July 23 in all provincial courts of justice, in all the towns, and among the mining communities were accepted in the Upper and the Lower Innthal, at Innsbruck and Hall, in Brixen, Clausen, and Neustift, but in

[1] Ferdinand's declaration on the occasion of his occupying the bishopric of Brixen, July 21, 1525 (Bucholtz, *Urkundenband*, pp. 642, 643)

[2] See Bucholtz, pp. 8, 335–338.

other parts of the Tyrol the insurrection continued its course. The courts of justice in the diocese of Brixen refused to give up the houses and castles that were besieged by the rebels.

In the towns of Brixen, Meran, and Sterzing two preachers made fresh attempts to stir up the populace; agitators from Schlanders plundered the Carthusian monastery of Schnals, and the inhabitants of Numyer burnt their magistrate in his own house. Nowhere, however, did the insurrection rage so fiercely as in the Valzigau and in the neighbourhood of Trient, and it was not finally suppressed in these quarters till the bloodiest measures had been resorted to.[1]

It was in the archbishopric of Salzburg that the revolution held its ground the longest.

On May 18, 1525, the Archbishop, Cardinal Matthäus Lang, wrote to Duke William of Bavaria: 'We stand in no slight terror of the needy artisans, and other destitute inhabitants of our town of Salzburg, who have nothing to lose. Should a rising of the peasantry take place in our diocese, these same artisans might easily be induced to join it.' The Duke might at any rate, he suggested, send a delegate to the town councillors, and represent to them that the Archbishop was earnestly minded to protect his lands and his people from the violence and destructiveness of the rebel Suabian peasantry, and to preserve them in peace, tranquillity, and submission, and that it was his intention to leave no insubordination unpunished in the district of Salzburg. 'By such statements' the Archbishop hoped 'that the loyal, well-to-do, and substantial burghers would be comforted and reassured, while the

[1] For fuller details see Bucholtz, pp. 8, 340-345.

poor and needy inhabitants, who might else, for the sake of gain, be incited to revolt, would be alarmed.'[1] A few days later, on May 25, the standard of rebellion was raised at Hof in der Gastein (now Hofgastein), and on the same day the Archbishop received the intelligence that 'a band of foreign peasants and some troops of infantry had assembled at Zell, in the Pinzgau, and intended marching on Salzburg, with any other peasants who might join them on the way.' The whole district of Salzburg was soon in revolt; the alarm bell sounded in village after village; the dwellers in the mountains hurried down to the plains, armed with pitchforks, poles, clubs, and old firearms; the community of Salzburg offered aid to the insurgents. On May 29 the Archbishop sent word to Munich that 'matters had come to such a pass in Salzburg that the whole town was given over to throttling, plundering, and shooting, and no man could be sure of his neighbour.' The Archbishop shut himself up in his castle with his chapter and council. The town was in the hands of the peasants and the guilds, who had ransacked the palace of the prince and were proceeding to lay siege to the castle. They already regarded themselves as rulers of the whole territory; every town, except Mühldorf, had sworn allegiance to them, and their commander-in-chief had issued an injunction to all the wardens and officials of the archbishopric to appear before him at Salzburg.[2]

The Archbishop's hopes of assistance from Bavaria, on the strength of the treaty of Ratisbon of 1524, were

[1] Jörg, pp. 113-114.

[2] With regard to the complaints and accusations made against the Archbishop by the people of Salzburg see Vogt, *Die bayerische Politik*, pp. 293-309.

disappointed. Duke Wilhelm thought far more of 'reaping profit for himself and his dominions out of the dire extremity of the ecclesiastical prince, his ally;' and he notified to the Salzburg rebels 'on his princely word and faith' that it was by no means his wish and intention to help the Cardinal of Salzburg against them: he was only sending an embassy, in order to arrive at an amicable settlement.'

For some of the peasants had given the Duke's delegates to understand that they no longer wanted the Archbishop for their reigning prince; they wished to be governed by a secular prince, and they even held out hopes of using their influence in the commonalty in favour of a prince of Bavaria. The Duke actually issued an order for garrisoning the town of Mühldorf, 'without any reference to the Archbishop.' He commissioned his envoys to express 'to the gentry, the councillors, and the peasants' his hope that they would agree to the occupation of Mühldorf for the furtherance of 'neighbourly concord;' it would not be in any way to their disadvantage, he said, and was merely a 'temporary measure pending the settlement of the matter.'

The Chancellor Eck warned the Duke urgently against this policy. 'If at this very hour,' he wrote to him on June 7, 1525, 'the Bishop of Salzburg and all the priests had been massacred, and the whole diocese were in the hands of the peasants, and they should wish to make it over to your Grace, even then your Grace would not find that sensible and pious people would advise your accepting it. Your Grace's forefathers, who have hitherto exceeded all rulers in the world in riches and ancient noble descent, have never countenanced such a proceeding.' 'To enter into an undertaking with

the peasants, to curry favour with them, or in any way whatever to have dealings with them, is to allow one's next-door neighbour's house to be burnt, and not to try to save it.' 'In my opinion it would be more profitable to your Grace to march to the help of the Bishop with a large military force, instead of forsaking him.'[1] The Chancellor was decidedly in favour of the Duke's improving his position and benefiting his principalities in an honourable manner, but not by securing the goodwill of the peasants. Above all, he urged, it was essential to keep in view the succession to the archbishopric of Salzburg of the Duke's brother, Duke Ernest, administrator of the bishopric of Passau. The latter, however, was little inclined, at that time at any rate, to ascend the archiepiscopal chair. 'Considering the excessive annoyances and the ill-usage which the ecclesiastical class has to endure from the laity, and the perilous nature of the present times, I have little desire,' he wrote, 'to burden myself further with ecclesiastical government.' And he added the following words of warning: 'The behaviour of the Salzburg peasantry is verily such as to put all princes on their guard; for other subjects and vassals are very likely to follow their example and begin to depose their rulers.'[2] Some of the insurgents also addressed themselves to Ferdinand, offering to recognise him as secular lord of the archbishopric, or else to appoint an Austrian bishop as regent. The rebels of the Innthal, who were in league with those of Salzburg, urged Ferdinand, 'with special animus against the Bishop,' to take possession

[1] Jörg, pp. 332–335, 559. Eck's letter of June 7, 1525, is given at full length by Vogt in his *Bayerische Politik*, pp. 460–464.

[2] *Ibid.* pp. 578–579.

of the diocese, promising him that the journeymen of Schwaz would furnish him with as many as 5,000 combatants.[1] The lordships of Salzburg and the boroughs of Krobsberg, Zillerthal, Kitzbübel, and Matrey had already been seized in the name of the Archduke.[2]

This archbishopric became the occasion of such a bitter political contest between the dynasties of Wittelsbach and Austria that a sanguinary war between them was anticipated.

When, at the suggestion of the Archbishop, the Suabian League decided, on June 25, to incorporate an additional 2,000 soldiers with the Bavarian troops which were maintained at the cost of the League, and to let the whole joint forces march against Salzburg, Duke Wilhelm did his utmost to frustrate the plan; he first of all contrived the postponement of the march, and even on July 6 was still anxious to enter into immediate relations with the Salzburg rebels; he actually appealed to his chancellor to know if it would not be 'practicable to get up a disturbance in the Archduke's provinces.' Finally, however, the League came to the rescue, and at the end of August a treaty was concluded according to which the insurgents were to deliver up the covenant of their league to the Archbishop, to continue paying the legal taxes, as before, to the clergy and the nobility, to restore all looted property, and to pay to the Suabian League 14,000 guldens as war indemnities. Complete exemption from punishment was guaranteed them, and, with regard to their grievances, they were assured that any of those which could not be at once redressed would be taken cognisance of by the League. The Archbishop was 'well satisfied' with the terms of this

[1] Jörg, p. 514. [2] *Ibid.* p. 606.

treaty, and he also agreed to the stipulation that pending the fulfilment of the conditions of the treaty three 'worthy and intelligent men' from among the peasantry should sit in his council. On September 1 the burgomaster of Salzburg 'in the name of the peasants' laid down the rebel arms and banners at the Archbishop's feet.[1] In a short time, however, fresh disturbances had broken out, and bands of peasants, armed anew, were going about threatening to 'rid themselves of the princes and nobles as soon as the trees were green again.'[2]

In the spring of 1526 the insurgents were once more prepared for fight. Peace and order were not restored till the Bloody Tribunal of Radstatt did its gruesome work.

[1] Jörg, pp. 579-608; Vogt, *Die bayerische Politik*, pp. 306-343.
[2] Jörg, pp. 636-656; Vogt, pp. 343-354.

CHAPTER V

CONSEQUENCES OF THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION

THE revolution, which had threatened to sweep away the whole traditional inheritance of the Christian past, and to overturn all the political and social conditions of Germany, was now completely stamped out.

But 'the aspect of large tracts of German territory was lamentably changed, and became even more so by reason of all that followed in the wake of these terrible risings.'

'O false and fickle fortune,' says Lorenz Fries in his 'Reflections on the Revolution,' 'you dazzle and blind the eyes of the people, so that they can no longer distinguish what is godly, honourable, and reasonable. You delude them with the hope that they are to be set free from all grievances, and are verily to become themselves lords and rulers; and when they have been led away by your false, unchristian blandishments the sole reward they get from you is to be turned into slaves and bondsmen; for not only do you not rid them of their burdens, but where these were light, trifling, and easy you make them doubly, trebly, aye, tenfold heavier and less endurable. You delude the poor creatures into thinking that, with very little trouble and labour, they will be able greatly to better their condition, and to become rich and prosperous; and

then, forsooth, you lead them into abject, lamentable poverty and wretchedness. You goad them on to pull down, burn, and pillage the houses and castles of their princes, lords, and other rulers, and then, behold, they are forced to work harder than ever before, with bitterer toil and heavier sweating, in order to pay back the treasures they have stolen, and to refill the granaries and cellars they have emptied. You suffer vineyards to be destroyed; harvest-fields to be trampled under foot; cottages to be burnt; money, treasures, clothes, and furniture to be plundered and carried out of the land; and, what is worst of all, you call the accursed, abominable source and origin of all this tumult, slaughter, and destruction by the most outrageously unsuitable name you could have hit upon—that is to say, a *Brotherhood.* And, worse still, you insult and blaspheme our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by covering your iniquities with the cloak of his dear and sacred name, and by daring to call your villainous conspiracy a *Christian Brotherhood.* And all the most unchristian, heathenish, tyrannical, and brutish proceedings and transactions of this Brotherhood of yours you call "grace and peace in Christ," whereas in reality they are nothing but discord, war, shame, robbery, incendiarism, and bloodshed.'[1]

'When,' asks Cochlaeus at the end of his pamphlet on the peasant war, 'when shall we be able to build up again all the many castles, cloisters, abbeys, churches, and villages which, in so short a time, have been pillaged and burnt down? Who, I ask, has gained anything by all this indescribable damage? Who is there who will not grieve for all the hundreds of monks

[1] Lorenz Fries, i. 338–339.

and nuns whom these proceedings have reduced from an honourable, God-fearing, meritorious calling to every species of infamy, calamity, and dishonour, so that they are compelled either to die of starvation or to earn their living in disreputable ways, for these poor victims have never been taught any handicraft or agricultural work? Many of them fled from their cloisters simply because they were unable to bear the persecution and contempt that Luther's teaching had brought on them; many others were ejected by force, and amongst those were numbers of aged, indigent persons who have served God day and night, and prayed without ceasing for their fellow-creatures for twenty, thirty, or even forty years, and have now nowhere to go to and no bread to eat.' 'Not less to be pitied and commiserated are the countless widows, orphans, sick and aged persons, who have been thrown into such great need, poverty, and affliction by all these insurrections, which in so short a time have robbed the land of thousands of its bread-winners. Houses have been burnt down, fields and vineyards are left untilled, clothes and furniture have been looted, cattle and horses carried off. Princes, landlords, and noblemen are clamouring for their rents and tithes. How in the name of heaven are the widows and orphans to pay them? The very stones might be moved to pity by so much poverty and misery.'

'There was great fear at first,' says the Bernese chronicler Anshelm, 'lest none should escape from the fury of the peasants, but in the end it was seen that no peasant escaped the edge of the sword. The lords and squires, who from lions had changed into hares, were turned into lions again; and the peasants, who from hares had grown into wolves, were turned back into

hares; insomuch that whereas before they went about merrily, slaughtering, plundering, and destroying without mercy, now they themselves are fugitives, and are being slaughtered without mercy. For now, after the victories they have gained, the princes and lords have become more merciless and unyielding than before, so that those also who either from fear or from impotence had left their dependents unprotected, and those (of whom there were but few) who had the reputation for some amount of mercy and goodness, were now moved to greater severity, thinking to restrain the ass with a tighter bit and curb, and thus to keep him in check.'

Germany indeed presented a melancholy aspect in all the districts over which the war and insurrection had raged; more than a thousand cloisters and castles had been reduced to cinders; hundreds of villages had been burnt down; fields lay uncultivated; farming utensils, cattle, and all movable goods had been carried off; the widows and orphans of more than 100,000 slaughtered peasants were in a state of profoundest misery.[1]

The princes and lords began 'a game with the peasants which yielded bloodshed and money.' 'I hope,' wrote one of the lords, 'we are now going to play with heads as the boys play with marbles.' 'There is no end to the chopping off of heads,' says Spalatin, court preacher to the Elector of Saxony, in July 1525;

[1] In a circular letter of the Bishop of Spires the number of the peasants killed in the war is given as over 150,000 (Geissel, *Kaiserdom*, p. 315, note 1). Barthol. Arnoldi von Usingen also speaks of 100,000 peasants slain within six months (Paulus, *Barthol. Arnoldi*, p. 101). Archduke Ferdinand (March 14, 1525) gives the number of those '*qui ont conspirez et jure ensemble*' as more than 200,000—'*plus de deux cent mil*' (Lanz, *Correspondenz*, i. 156).

the number of widows and orphans is growing preposterously large.' One of the hangmen of the Margrave of Brandenburg, Casimir von Anspach-Baireuth, sent in an account of over eighty cases of beheading and sixty-two of putting out eyes, besides seven peasants whose fingers he had chopped off. 'If all our peasants are put to death in this manner,' wrote the Margrave George to his brother Casimir, 'where shall we find others to grow our food? It behoves us, indeed, to consider the matter wisely.' Imprisoning and torturing went on continuously in the margraviate down to the end of the year 1526, when the knight Hans von Waldenfels was moved to expostulate with the Margrave. He represented to Casimir that 'a number of poor prisoners are now being tried and tortured for quite trivial and unimportant matters, and their destitute wives and helpless children are dying of hunger. . . .' 'He entreated the Margrave once for all to forget the past and to incline his soul to mercy.' 'According to our simple understanding,' said the members of the town council, 'it seems unjust to punish with such severity men who have merely acted unadvisedly.' Five hundred people, at least, had been delivered over to the executioner by Casimir, and by the fines that he imposed up to the year 1528 he realised 104,000 guldens.

It is a striking proof of the prosperity of the peasants at this time that when the property of those who had been put to death, or outlawed, was sold, there was scarcely a single case in which, after payment of debts, and in spite of the long period of desolation, there was not a residue of from fifty to a hundred guldens; every village was found to contain occupiers

possessing from 700 to 1,000 guldens, which, according to the then value of money, was quite a knight's fortune.

In other districts besides those of Würzburg and Anspach-Baireuth the executioners were kept well employed. In the town of Basle one of them told Thomas Platter that he had beheaded more than 500 peasants. In Würtemberg several women who had come forward as preachers had their tongues cut out, and twelve male preaching agitators were punished either by death, or by torture on the wheel, or drowning. The knight Cunz von Rietheim condemned three peasants to have their tongues cut out. The provost of the Suabian League signed with his own hand the death-warrants of 1,200 men. In a list laid before the council of the Suabian League at the end of 1526 the number of victims executed within the district of the League only was computed at not less than 1,000.[1]

The districts under revolt were compelled to lay down their arms. The Bavarian officers in the Lech valley wrote on July 23, 1525, that the peasants from the Suabian districts had come with tears and bitter laments and had laid their firearms and the swords, which were their constant companions, down at their feet.[2] In the district of Salzburg the officials of the Suabian League ordered all the bells in the churches to be pulled down and not to be put up again till further orders.[3] Fines of from three to twelve guldens, and even more, were exacted from every household.

[1] See Baumann, *Quellen aus Oberschwaben*, pp. 106, 112-113, 126, 270, 347, 707, 795.

[2] Jörg, p. 632.

[3] Leist, p. 144.

'Every village and borough,' says a proclamation of the Suabian League, 'is to pay to the League six guldens per house as compensation and for punishment, and the rich are to help the poor in this matter. Any village or borough which has not paid the sum due from it by the appointed date shall be pillaged and burnt down.'[1] 'I will not conceal from you,' wrote one of the Rotenburg 'city magnates' to a relative, 'that the town is ruined, and fined beyond its means of payment. And no matter whether a peasant or a burgher be innocent, he has to pay indemnity to the League all the same. Several of my peasants who had nothing whatever to do with the insurrection have already been burnt to death. In short, we of the upper classes of Rotenburg have been utterly ruined through the common people. I do not see how I am ever to be compensated by these wretches for all I have lost, for they are penniless.'[2] Because some of the citizens of Rotenburg had taken part in the destruction of the castle of Schillingsfürst the Counts of Hohenlohe fined the town 20,000 guldens; one of the insurgents who had signed a letter in which the peasants had asked the Counts for their artillery was made to pay for the whole of it. In many cases, moreover, the fines were paid two or three times over; for while the Suabian League was bent on collecting them by means of its own officials, the princes claimed the right to do it as heads of the army, while the territorial nobility maintained that it was their business as lords of the soil and owners of the villages. The amount of compensation money paid to the Count Palatine

[1] Oechsle, p. 437. Archduke Ferdinand was still more severe in his punishments; see articles in Schreiber's *Bauernkrieg*, iii. 130, 171.

[2] Oechsle, p. 437.

Ludwig, one of the most lenient of the princes, was reckoned at 200,000 guldens.

Many of the ecclesiastical princes distinguished themselves by their mercifulness to the rebels. The Gebweiler chronicle furnishes the following testimony to the clemency of the Prince Abbot of Murbach: 'The same miserable, distressing condition of things still continues at Ensisheim. How many honest, God-fearing people have been unjustly beheaded! We have been in no small apprehension here lest we should suffer from the well-known cruelty of the Ensisheimers, but our pious prince and most gracious lord, the Abbot of Murbach, has behaved towards us like a kind and pitying father. Verily if he had not acted as he has done the people of Ensisheim would have taken us captive in our own homes.' And again: 'The Abbot was so merciful in his imposition of fines that he incurred the hostility of the nobles of Ensisheim.'[1] The Zimmer chronicle speaks as follows concerning the lenient behaviour of George, Bishop of Spires: 'So wise and lenient a prince and ruler ought to live beyond the ordinary term of man's existence. Very few of the peasants were punished by him with death or confiscation of goods; he reduced the amount of the fines, and did all in his power to lessen the general misery.'[2] Bishop Wilhelm of Strasburg also showed the greatest leniency. All peasants in his diocese who had taken part in the revolt received forgiveness at his hands: in the Lent season of 1526 a general mandate was issued from the episcopal chancery to all the clergy of

[1] Hartfelder, *Baurenkrieg*, p. 57.

[2] Zimmer, *Chronicle*, ii. 426; Remling, *Geschichte der Bischöfe von Speyer*, ii. 261.

the diocese, enjoining them to grant pardon to the peasants who had helped in the destruction of churches and cloisters.[1] A like spirit of mercy was shown by Caspar Riggert, abbot of Maurusmunster, whose monastery, church, and library had been pillaged by the peasants, and whose life had been threatened: he procured the release of many of the unhappy prisoners; 'he was ready to make every sacrifice in order to lessen the misery of the poor people and to obtain for them forgiveness of their crimes and brutality.'[2]

In most of the districts where the insurrection had raged the families left behind by the fugitive peasants lapsed into the most pitiable condition. The Suabian League directed that in all cases of fugitives who did not sue for mercy and give themselves up for punishment 'their wives and children should be sent after them, and all their goods and chattels seized, and half of their property be made over to the magistrates of the district.' How large was the number of such unhappy victims may be seen from a statement in the Donauwörth chronicle. 'There were found to be about 50,000 peasants who were obliged to leave the country and who had large possessions.' 'Whosoever also,' the mandate of the Suabian League goes on, 'shall kill any one of these fugitives shall not be punished for the deed, nor treated as if he had committed a crime.'[3]

[1] Hartfelder, *Bauernkrieg*, p. 174. [2] *Ibid.* p. 175.

[3] Bensen, pp. 485, 500; Oechsle, p. 437; Baumann, *Quellen*, p. 278. Of the fugitive peasants, says Knöringer in the *Annales Faucenses*, 'some betook themselves to the King of France, some to the Venetians, and some to the Turks, from whom they took pay to fight against the Emperor and the Roman Empire' (Baumann, *Quellen*, p. 408).

The fate of the peasants was precisely similar to that described in a song which ran as follows:—

To you a new tale I'll repeat:
In all the German land
The princes have the peasants beat,
And slain them with their hand.
We'll write to them to sheathe their knives
And swords, and spare our lives,
To feed our children and our wives,
And leave us our possessions too.
This is what we mean to do.

What insolence you dare to show
To prince and noble lord!
Now everybody well must know
You've broken faith and word.
Fealty unto them you swore;
Your promises you keep no more,
Which angers these great lords right sure.
Now look you, you have cause to fear,
For at your threshold points the spear.

So now, my friends, you'd better mind
And keep your feudal vows,
Lest one fine morning you should find
You've lost your calves and cows,
Your corn, your furniture, and all
Your cattle stolen from the stall,
All goods and chattels, great and small,
And penniless you're left to roam,
A beggar, without house and home.

'Those who had hoped to better their condition by means of the insurrection, who had been discontented with their condition, and had grumbled at taxes, services, and tithes, and wanted to be themselves lords, these same people were now more severely plagued than ever, and became utterly destitute and wretched:'—

A happy lot had they
Enjoyed long time, I trow;
Then ceased they to obey,
Forgot their duty and their vow.

Like Turks, to plunder, rob, and burn
In frenzied fury they began;
The rulers, so they said, should learn
How mighty was the common man.
They meant also to share all things,
And they would lords and masters be;
But punishment came on with wings
Of haste. Ah, God! their mis'ry see.
'Neath chastisement they rave;
Far worse is now their plight;
Nobody can them save,
They're beaten down with might.

So comes my song to end
With gruesome tyranny;
Ah, God, beseech Thee, send
Peace and tranquillity!

It was due in no small measure to Luther's pamphlet against the peasants, so said the Strassburg preacher Capito, that the country had passed from the turmoil of insurrection to the horrors of retaliation and revenge.[1]

A most painful impression was indeed produced on the minds of all thoughtful persons by the fact that Luther, regardless of the universal and terrible misery into which the revolution had plunged Germany, should have returned with undiminished violence to his attacks on the Church, and by his pamphlet published on New Year's Day 1526 should have again incited his followers to hurl slander and abuse at the Pope, the bishops, and the whole body of the clergy. 'There are some who are of opinion,' says Luther in this so-called New Year's greeting, 'that it is time we should cease reviling the papacy and the clergy; for seeing that after all the

[1] Baum, Butzer, and Capito, p. 331. See also the letter of Hermann Muehlpfort in Zwickau (June 4, 1525) to Stephen Roth, in Rolde's *Analecta Luthera*, pp. 64–68.

enormous quantity of books, papers, and pamphlets which have been published for the purpose of abusing, reviling, misrepresenting, and crying them down, they are not yet vanquished, it is plainly evident that they never can be vanquished. With such opinions, however, I do not agree, but, on the contrary, I think their fate will be such as we read of in the Revelation of St. John concerning that scarlet woman with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication.' 'In the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her till she be trodden down like dirt in the streets and there is nothing so much despised on earth as this bloodthirsty Jezebel.' Thus must they be treated, 'above all for the reason that they' (namely, the Pope, the bishops, the secular and monastic clergy), 'since the insurgent peasants have been defeated, have begun anew to puff themselves up and to boast, as if they expected to be entirely reinstated and to come to even greater honour than before, especially as certain godless princes and lords whom I could mention are lending them support. So then, as they will not knock under to the blow that has been given them, but are courting more blows and discomfitures, and seem to desire to hear again how their diabolical proceedings ought to be estimated, we will gladly oblige them in this respect, and stir up the stinking dirt again till they are fain to stop up their jaws and nostrils. Therefore, dear friends, let us set to work again to write, poetise, versify, sing, paint, and in every possible manner show up this noble race of idolaters as they deserve and according to their true merits. Cursed be he who remains idle in this matter while

he knows that he can do God a service by helping it on.'[1]

'In such wise,' says a contemporary polemical writer concerning this pamphlet of Luther's, 'with the ruins of innumerable churches, cloisters, and castles still before our eyes, and the constant dread of fresh risings hanging over us, was the bitterness of class hatred fed continually afresh.'[2]

In Franconia and in the Palatinate secret emissaries went round in 1526 telling the peasants that they must wait till the following spring, when Ulrich von Würtemberg would espouse their cause and start a fresh enterprise with his freebooting companies. At the beginning of 1527 insurgent bands assembled in the district of Röteln, and by means of secret agents endeavoured to stir up a fresh insurrection. On January 18, 1527, the Margrave Philip of Baden informed George, Bishop of Spires, that his councillors had written to apprise him that in the Ortenau, in the Breisgau, and in Alsatia 'all sorts of plots and intrigues were again being carried on, in order to incite the peasants to fresh rebellion.' On April 1, 1527, the Margrave Casimir told his brother, Duke Albrecht of Prussia, in a confidential letter, that it had been intimated to him by some of the emissaries of the leagues that, 'notwithstanding the severity with which the rulers had punished last year's unchristian insurrection, it had been resolved to muster fresh peasant troops this year in Switzerland, in the Hegau, and round about Feldkirch, and to organise another army; the conspirators had moreover been heard to say that they meant to proceed

[1] *Collected Works*, xxix. 377–378.
[2] 'Contra M. Lutherum,' fol. 21.

in a different manner from what had been done before. These same emissaries had further said 'that it had been decided to muster a force at Strassburg also and to make an attack on the town council.' On October 17, 1527, the four electors, Archbishop Albrecht of Mayence, Archbishop Hermann of Cologne, Archbishop Richard of Treves, and the Palatine Elector Ludwig, concluded a treaty of alliance by which they guaranteed each other mutual assistance in case of the outbreak of another peasant war.[1]

The revolution brought no amelioration in the condition of the masses. No attempt whatever was made, after its suppression, to effect any radical reforms, either social or political, in the lower strata of society; on the contrary both in towns and provinces all previous evils were only increased and intensified. The abuses of forestalling and of monopolies and the exploitation of the people by trading societies went on uninterruptedly; and the system of capitalist undertakers now first developed to the full its destructive power.[2] While under the operation of this system

[1] Oechsle, pp. 243–244; Zimmermann, ii. 896; Jörg, pp. 643, 657; Stern, Regesten, in the *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins*, xxiii. 198–201. See our statements, vol. iii. (9th–12th ed.) p. 112, (13th ed.) p. 114, (15th and 16th ed.) p. 115.

[2] 'Experience has taught us,' says H. Martensen, Protestant Bishop of Zealand, 'that under the pressure of capital countless numbers of human beings have been reduced to a condition that differs very little from the slavery of the ancient world. It is the Reformation, moreover, by contributing as it did to the breakdown of mediæval restraints, which gave the impulse to the fuller development of the power of capital. But the reformers, alas! did worse mischief even than this; for while carrying on the work of secularising the dominions of the Church they by no means sufficiently considered the social purposes of the property they were dealing with, but in each case handed it over recklessly to private individuals and literally threw it away.' Eltrik (Gotha, 1879), iii. 168–171. See also Martensen, *Socialismus und Christenthum* (Kiel,

the prices of all necessary articles of food and clothing went on rising continually, the wages of labourers, both industrial and agricultural, fell to half the amount of what they had been in the fifteenth century. The relations of the peasants to their landowners were also changed for the worse, and the condition of the former began to assume the same melancholy character as that of the Bohemian peasantry after the Hussite wars. During the revolution the peasants of Germany, in order to rid themselves altogether of the claims of the lords of manors to feudal services and fees, had, as far as possible, torn up or burnt all documents and agreements relating to tithes, rents, fines, and socage services; now, however, either fresh contracts were drawn up, with increased scales of services and tribute money, or else no written agreements whatever were made with regard to the reciprocal duties and rights of peasants and proprietors; and the saying of Matthäus von Normann concerning the treatment of peasants by landed proprietors became applicable to many districts of the Empire: 'Jetzund deit men wat men will'[1] ('Now they take whatever they like'). The descriptions of agricultural progress and peasant prosperity in the fifteenth century[2] afford a glaring contrast to those sketches, for instance, which Franck and Sebastian Münster have given us of the peasants of the sixteenth century. 'The peasants,' says the last of these two writers, 'lead mise-

1875), pp. 22–25. 'The capitalist era, says Carl Mark, 'dates first from the sixteenth century'—*Das Capital* (2nd ed.), i. 128, 744.

[1] See Gaede, *Die gutsherrlich-bäuerlichen Besitzverhältnisse*, pp. 34–35, 40.

[2] See our statements, vol. i. (9th–12th ed.) pp. 275–321, (13th ed.) pp. 283–330, (15th and 16th ed.) pp. 298–345 (*English Translation*, vol. i. pp. 309 354).

rable, abject lives. Their homes are wretched huts made of wood and mud, standing on the earth and roofed with straw; their food is black rye-bread, oatmeal-porridge, and boiled peas and lentils; water and whey are their drinks; a pair of *Bundschuhs* and a felt hat make up their clothing. They are obliged to render frequent service to their lords during the year; to till the fields, to sow seeds, to cut the fruit and carry it to the barns, to chop wood and to dig graves. There is nothing that these poor folk are not expected to do, and they cannot evade their duties without penalty.' 'My own father even, who was himself a peasant,' said the Suabian writer, Heinrich Müller, in 1550, 'can remember a time when the peasants had much better food than they have now. They had meat every day in abundance; nowadays the food of the better class of peasants is almost worse than that of day-labourers and servants was formerly.' [1]

The peasants became themselves the singers of their sufferings. During the peasant war hopes of riches and honour had been held out to them, but they had become poorer than ever by the revolution:

'We should get rich,' they said,
'And to great honour grow;
These promises misled
And lured us to great woe.
Have we grown rich and glad?
Have pity on us, Lord!
We've lost all that we had;
We're poor now, on my word!'

[1] See our statements, vol. i. (9th–12th ed.) p. 314, (13th ed.) pp. 322–323, (15th and 16th ed.) pp. 340–342 (*English Translation*, vol. ii. pp. 351–354). Fuller details on the melancholy change in the industrial and economical conditions of Germany, and on the causes of this change, will be found in vol. viii. pp. 73 ff., 93 ff.

A peasant in the bishopric of Spires vented his feelings in the following lines:—

When I took up the soldier's lot,
Liege lord and oath I clean forgot;
Great honour and fine house I got.
At Kestenberg, like any sot,
I drank good wine from brimming pot.
How did this suit me, friend? God wot—
Is grass the dog's true drug, or not?
Full thirteen gulden and an *Ort*
I paid! The devil bless the lot!

Another peasant sang:—

It happened one year in the summer-tide
That many a spot was ravaged quite;
'Twas done by the peasants' hatred and spite.
But a little time afterwards, with might,
The nobles too were plundered quite;
For worse had grown the peasants' spite,
Under the pretext of Gospel right.
And eight days later to the site
Where Pfedersheim lies did the Palatine ride;
With armour equipped and with great might
Against the peasants he did fight;
And many lay slaughtered in his sight,
And many homes were robbed outright.
So then it proved a woful plight
To be from serfdom delivered quite,
As fleas in August dogs do bite;
Fifteen twenty-five's the right
Date of this most bloody fight.

During the social revolution it was the peasants who had inscribed the word 'Evangel' on their banners, and based their claims on the authority of Scripture; now, however, the Gospel was pressed into the service of the governing powers. Luther, Melanchthon, and other leaders of the clerical revolution now became assiduous in their efforts to get the strictest possible control established over the people; the common people,

they said, must be kept down by heavy pressure, or they would become insolent.

'Scripture, speaking figuratively,' wrote Luther in the year 1526, 'calls rulers drovers, task-masters, and scourgers. Like the drivers of donkeys, who have to belabour their animals incessantly with rods and whips, or they will not obey, so must the rulers do with the people' (with 'Herr Omnes,' as he calls them); 'they must drive, beat, throttle, hang, burn, behead, and torture, so as to make themselves feared and to keep the people in check. For God is not satisfied with our merely holding up the law before the people; he requires that we should drive them to keep it. For if we only held it up before them, and did not compel them to carry it into practice, it would all come to nothing.'[1] In one of his sermons on the first book of Moses, which were first published in the year 1527, Luther said 'it was almost desirable that servants should be subjected to a kind of slavery, such as had existed among the Jews. Then Abimelech,' he said, 'took sheep and oxen, and men-servants and maid-servants, and gave them to Abraham, and spake unto Sarah, &c. &c. That was a royal gift. Then he gave them power over the sheep and oxen and men-servants and maid-servants, so that they were all personal property, and the owners might sell them as they liked; and it would verily be almost best that this state of things should exist again, for nobody can control and tame the populace in any other way. And so you see that Abraham and Abimelech held by this custom and let their dependents remain in bondage. Some will say it would have been great kindness and mercifulness if they had set them free; how could love

[1] *Collected Works*, xv. 276.

endure that they should be kept as slaves? Just in the same way as love endures that people should be hanged on the gallows or otherwise punished. For there must be firm control by the secular government, in order to curb and manage the people. The owners would gladly have set them free, if they could, but it would not have answered; they would soon have grown too haughty if too many rights had been granted them.' Nobody can 'keep the people in order otherwise than with the curb of outward rule. It is the want of this that causes all the complaints about the rabble and the working-classes.' There is no proper government anywhere; every one does just as he likes.'[1]

When Heinrich von Einsiedel, a nobleman who was troubled in his conscience concerning the socage services by which his peasants were oppressed, once sought advice from Luther, the latter answered him as follows: 'He ought not to impose any fresh services, but he might make his conscience easy as to those that had come down from his fathers and forefathers; at the same time it would not be a good thing to allow the right of imposing socage services to be wholly abolished, for the common people must be kept down with heavy weights, or they would become too arrogant.'[2] Melanchthon gave the following advice to this same nobleman: 'Your Lordship should not make any alterations in the old socage services, and your conscience need not be troubled on this point. Discipline of this kind in corporeal matters is well-pleasing to God;

[1] *Collected Works*, xxxiii. 389–390.

[2] Kapp, *Nachlese*, i. 281–282. Spalatin agreed entirely in all these opinions with the 'most venerable and highly learned Herr Martin Luther, our beloved father' (*ibid.* i. 284–286).

and if the burdens do fall unequally, and are sometimes a little too hard, let your Lordship call to mind the saying of St. Paul, Romans xiii. 1, "The powers that be are ordained of God." ' 'And, moreover, the services and burdens enjoined on the lower orders are in reality much lighter than those which fall to the share of the rulers, who have to labour hard in war, in council chambers, and in offices. This is undeniably true. It is also undeniable that our punishments for crimes and vices of all sorts are much too light. Hence it is that God allows the discipline of service and taxation to be sharpened, so that there may be some sort of restraint on the people, and that the world may not be utterly ruined. This is very well summed up in the saying of the Son of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus xxxiii. 24), which Georgius Spalatinus also quotes: "Fodder, a wand, and burdens are for the ass; and bread, correction, and work for a servant." Now these things cannot be exactly the same in all places; yet nevertheless such ordinances are certainly well-pleasing to God. Joseph's rule in Egypt was very much more severe; and even in France and Italy, at the present time, there exist much heavier burdens, which, nevertheless, are by no means unjust. I beg of your Lordship to make yourself happy on this score; for it is undoubtedly in accordance with God's Word and with divine truth that all reasonable land-laws should be enforced and maintained, even though they should be different in different places, and harder in one country than in another.' 'May God give our rulers the power to make and to enforce all such ordinances!' [1]

In a special pamphlet published at the end of May

[1] *Corp. Reform.* vii. 432–433.

1525 Melanchthon elaborated his views on the unconditional obedience and submission which subjects were bound to render to the ruling authorities in all secular matters whatever. 'Subjects,' he said, 'should remember that they are in reality serving God in all the hardships which they have to endure from their sovereign lords, whether of service, or taxation, or what not; and that such endurance is to the full as holy a work as if any one should be specially called by God to raise a dead man to life again, or to perform any other miracle. Vassals and subjects must look upon their rulers as wise and just men, and must show gratitude to them. We often hear one or another cry out that he is being treated unjustly; but none ever seem to consider that they ought to submit to the will of God, manifested in his appointed rulers, and that there has never been any earthly government wholly free from flaws.' 'Do you say: "But what if they oppress us too heavily, or unjustly?" I answer: Even if a prince should be guilty of injustice, and should do you injury, and fleece you, nevertheless it is not right for you to raise a rebellion. Whosoever rises up against rulers is acting in opposition to the Gospel, which requires of us that we should be willing to bear injustice not from rulers only but from everybody.' With regard to the stipulations in the peasants' articles concerning the choice of pastors, it was decidedly right that the congregations should everywhere have the right to elect their own ministers, but the reigning prince must also have part in the election, for it was his business to see that nothing revolutionary was preached or done. 'Now it had come to pass in many places in German lands that the peasants had appointed

preachers who had led the people astray, who had taught them that they must not give tithes nor pay taxes any longer; and the result had been a lamentable insurrection.' Every one is bound to pay whatever a secular ruler imposes, whether it be the tenth part or the eighth part. The Romans had undoubtedly appropriated much that God had destined for the priests or the Temple, and the Jews had disputed as to whether they were bound to give tribute otherwise than as God had ordained; but they were bound to pay tribute to the ruling powers, since they themselves were no longer the masters of their property. Subjects are bound to pay the tithes, for the ruling authorities have laid down this law concerning property, and whoever sets himself against it is aiming at depriving rulers of their rights. In Egypt the people gave a fifth part, and there everything belonged to the king. This regulation, moreover, was made by Joseph, who was inspired by the Holy Ghost; and he also oppressed the people heavily, but, nevertheless, they were obliged to obey. 'If a bad use is made of the tithe-money, that is not the business of the subjects. Even then they are not to keep back from the rulers what is their due, but they must give what is required from them until it pleases the rulers to alter their decrees.' 'It was monstrous,' he said, 'even criminal, of the peasants to refuse to be bondsmen. This rebellious spirit was opposed to the Gospel, and could not be justified.' 'Nay, it was desirable, rather, that such an unruly, undisciplined people as the Germans should have even less freedom than they possessed. Joseph had oppressed the land of Egypt, so that the people might not become too unruly.' If subjects had any complaints to make

concerning encroachments on communal property, in forests, and in water, they must address themselves to the Diet. 'It may often happen that the ruling authorities have just cause for enclosing common lands, in order to preserve them, or what not; and even should despotic measures have been adopted it is wrong to oppose such measures by insurrection.'

The death-fees exacted from widows and orphans were the only taxes that ought to be abolished. Even the well-grounded stipulation of the peasants that in the courts of justice the traditional punishments only should be utilised, and no arbitrary ones should be imposed, found no favour with Melanchthon. 'Rulers may impose fresh punishments, according to the necessities of the country,' he said, 'for God has appointed them for the prevention and punishment of evil, and the peasants have no right to lay down the law for their rulers in this matter. The Germans are such an ungovernable, bloodthirsty nation that it would be well to put much more severe restraints upon them; for Solomon says (Proverbs xxvi. 3), "A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back." And again (Ecclesiasticus xxxiii. 24), "Fodder, a wand, and burdens are for the ass; and bread, correction, and work for a servant." Also God calls worldly government a sword, but a sword which must cut either through our possessions, our bodies, or our lives, according to what our misdeeds require.'

After thus pleading for the unlimited power of princely rule Melanchthon goes on to urge the princes not only to draw tighter the reins of secular government, but also to interfere in the internal affairs of the Church. 'It is imperatively necessary,' he says, 'that

you should take active measures with regard to cloisters and other religious foundations, and secure the abolition of the gross abuses connected with the Mass.' 'God is verily punishing the country and the people, and it is happening with us even as St. Paul said of the Corinthians, that 'many were weak and sickly among them' because of the misuse of the Mass.' Furthermore the princes ought to allow the clergy to marry, for St. Paul says also that 'in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils . . . forbidding to marry.'

If the princes would meet their subjects in a friendly spirit, and do away with the aforesaid abuses, things might be settled on a satisfactory footing. In case, however, that some of the people should not respond to such friendly advances on the princes' part, but should persist in their insubordination and their attempts to overthrow all government, then the princes must exercise their 'full authority to punish these miscreants like murderers; and they may rest assured that in so doing they will be rendering service to God, for God has placed them in power in order that they may prevent slaughter and bloodshed.'[1]

But by far the most advanced advocate of unlimited authority in rulers over their subjects—even in matters of faith and conscience—was Martin Butzer. Subjects, he said, must be submissive to all government whatever, without any distinction. Even when rulers gave commands which were contrary to God's Word, the

[1] A pamphlet by Philip Melanchthon against the articles of the peasants, 1525, in the *Corp. Reform.* xx. 641–662. On the causes that led to the publication of the pamphlet see the *Corp. Reform.* i. 742, 747; Hartfelder's *Bauernkrieg*, pp. 184–189.

subjects must obey them, for it was to be presumed that it was God himself who was sharpening the rod for punishment. Whereas the ruling sovereign was invested with supreme power, it followed that the control in religious matters belonged by right to him also. It was his business to see that his subjects lived virtuously, and, as religion alone insured virtuous living, he must provide for the establishment of true religion. Rulers were justified in exterminating, by fire and sword, all subjects who professed a false religion; for false religion was the parent of every kind of vice. People holding a wrong faith should be punished much more severely than robbers and murderers: even the wives and the innocent children and the cattle belonging to heretics might lawfully be put to death.[1]

The new doctrine of the unlimited authority of secular rulers over their subjects, and of the necessity for curtailing all ecclesiastical property, gained multitudes of followers among the powerful classes, and for many districts of Germany a time soon came akin to that of which Sebastian Franck, himself an opponent of the Catholic Church, had written: 'Formerly, under the papacy, there was much more freedom to punish the vices of princes and nobles; now, however, these great people must be flattered in everything, or else they declare that the land has grown rebellious. God have pity on us!' 'Everybody shapes his or her belief according to the dictum of the ruling powers, and all bow down to the God of the land. If one prince dies and another overseer of the faith succeeds,

[1] See Hagen, *Deutschlands literarische Verhältnisse*, iii. 154–157. See also Paulus, *Die Strassburger Reformatoren und die Gewissensfreiheit* (Strasburg and Freiburg i. Br., 1895), p. 1 ff.

as likely as not the Word of God becomes changed. Thus the common people are swayed hither and thither without any reason; and so also are their bishops and spiritual teachers: one and all they use the coin of the established currency.'[1]

Princes, nobles, and magistrates entered on the inheritance of the revolution.

[1] *Cosmographie*, 37[b]. See Cornelius, *Münsterischer Aufruhr*, ii. 44–47.

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